

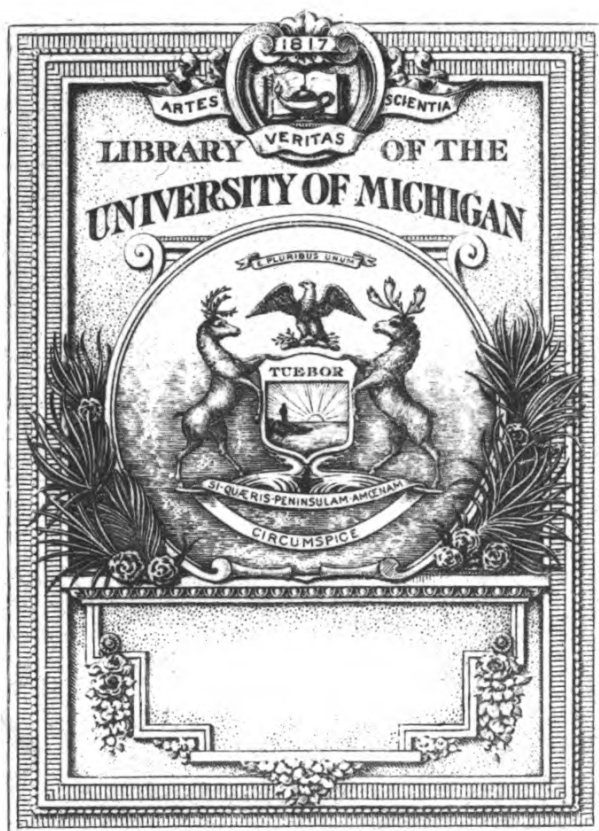
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*GUADALCANAL  
ROUND-TRIP*

BOOKS BY  
ALFRED S. CAMPBELL



*An Introduction to Country Life*  
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*Under the Capstone*  
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*The Wizard and His Magic Powder*  
*Guadalcanal Round-Trip*

# GUADALCANAL ROUND-TRIP

*THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN  
RED CROSS FIELD DIRECTOR  
IN THE PRESENT WAR*

BY

ALFRED S. CAMPBELL

PRIVATELY PRINTED

LAMBERTVILLE, NEW JERSEY, 1945

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**PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY**

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN  
OF THE MARINE CORPS AND NAVY  
WITH WHOM I WENT TO GUADALCANAL,  
IN APPRECIATION  
OF THEIR FRIENDSHIP





## FOREWORD

ALFRED CAMPBELL, being a Red Cross worker, and I, being a war correspondent, were assigned to the same cabin aboard a troop transport en route to Guadalcanal. Apparently, we were quartered together because we were non-combatants; our room-mates being a dentist and a Roman Catholic Father.

But it soon became evident that Campbell and the others, although non-combatants, were important to the morale of the entire ship—that they more than pulled their own weight amongst the cargo of men and officers inward-bound to the Jap-held stronghold of Guadalcanal. They were all indefatigable workers in solving any non-military problem which might be facing any of the men.

For instance, Campbell and Dr. Garrison, the dentist and recreation officer, zealously arranged shipboard movies to ease the tension of the voyage. They were busy commuters amongst the fleet of transports, borrowing, trading, possibly stealing movies for those on board, each time the ship halted. But this was only a small part of their activity.

Campbell had a couple of great trunks full of amusement devices: playing cards, checker boards, boxing gloves—even such relatively rare

items as fish spears and fishing tackle. These items had been purchased, I understood, for use at the time when we should reach the tropical island where we would land.

But the crew members and troops soon found that Campbell had a soft heart, and that at the slightest provocation he would part with practically any item of Red Cross property, or his own personal property if anyone wanted it.

Campbell was so conscientious about his job that he often shamed me. I remember the nights when in our blacked-out cabin I would hear Al stirring at three or four in the morning; he was getting up and dressing so that he could stand beside a gun crew during the long cold watches on deck. He wanted to know the men on the various jobs of a transport on the move, so that he might better understand and better do his job.

In the daytime as at night, I noticed that he tried to circulate as much as possible among the different parts of the ship, to study the needs of the men, and their character.

When I left the ship, transferring to another vessel, Campbell was still going strong. Now, I am not surprised to see that he is still pouring out energy and enthusiasm. This time into this book.

RICHARD TREGASKIS

## GUADALCANAL ROUND-TRIP

OF all the thousands of men going off to war on that beautiful afternoon in May, 1942, John Clancy and I were undoubtedly the least military in appearance. No uniforms. No A-bags, B-bags or seabags. No passports. No sailing orders. We were setting out for an unknown destination. Had we realized that we were already on the first leg of the Guadalcanal offensive, in which we were to have an active part, we would have been excited, eager. As it was, we sat in the Pullman in silence, feeling depressed, as the train pulled out of Washington's Union Station.

Some months previous, both of us had volunteered for overseas service with the American Red Cross. Separately, for we hadn't met so far, we went through the usual F.B.I. and other checkups

and were called to Washington for the customary two weeks of intensive training. It so happened that John was assigned to a later training class, so I never met him until the day before we started out, when, as Field Director, I was told that John had been assigned to me as assistant.

Choosing a college room-mate is almost as serious a step as choosing a wife, and the selection of a companion with whom to go through air and submarine attack while trying to achieve the impossible is even more tricky. I drew John through pure chance; a telegram addressed to another assistant Field Director was mis-sent to John, and when we met it was too late to make a change. I couldn't have had a more loyal friend nor a more efficient co-worker.

At that time American Red Cross was sending Field Directors out to many parts of the world. There were some, I knew, in England, a few in the South Pacific, especially in Australia. One or two, captured in the Philippines, were Japanese prisoners.

The Japanese forces had been moving steadily in the direction of Australia. If they gained their objective and were able to take over that Conti-



nent they would control the whole Pacific as far as Hawaii. Our unknown destination was Guadalcanal, where even then the Japanese were building an airfield now known as Henderson Field, from which to launch an attack on the New Hebrides, Fiji, New Caledonia and, finally, Australia and New Zealand.

The training which I had in Washington could not possibly prepare me for the job which fell to my lot. In the first place, I was not yet assigned definitely; in the second, the whole offensive was so secret that only a very few high-ranking Army, Navy and Marine Corps officers knew of it; and last of all, no one in Red Cross could possibly foresee even a fraction of the situations which would arise and be dumped in our laps for immediate solution. As a result, my training included only the functions of Field Directors assigned to army bases or naval training stations in the United States. Bill Wright, our instructor, did a fine job of teaching us all he knew, but there were too many unknown factors concerning which neither he nor anyone else knew anything at all.

On my first day in the classroom I started to make myself acquainted with my fellow-students.

The first man I accosted told me that he was an undertaker; the second said that he was an embalmer "in civilian life," so I drew the not unwarranted conclusion that units going out would be equipped with personnel to ship back their bodies in good shape. This impression was not lessened by an interview with a functionary in another department who asked many questions about my past, demanded a photograph and then explained casually, "It's for your obituary."

In the group were three men who almost immediately became my close friends; Herb Oviatt, Dick Asquith and Tom Morrison. Like myself, they were volunteers for overseas service, although the bulk of the others had been chosen for domestic service. The four of us used to stop in at the Roger Smith Hotel every evening on the way back from class, for a drink and a discussion of what we had learned, followed by the wildest kind of speculation as to our future assignments. Dick and I wanted to go to England. Herb and Tom were thinking favorably of Australia. What actually happened was that Dick went to Fiji, Herb to Hawaii (and later Midway), Tom to England and myself to Guadalcanal.

As soon as our training was completed we were sent to army or navy bases for practical experience; Herb to a submarine base, Tom to Fort Dix, New Jersey, Dick to a Southern army camp and myself to Fort Williams, Maine. There I acted as Assistant Field Director, covering not only the Fort, but nearly a dozen other nearby posts, including several located on islands in Casco Bay. Those weeks in Maine taught me one valuable lesson about my job; it would be one of the easiest or one of the toughest in the world, depending entirely upon how much time and effort and thought I put into it.

Now, after a couple of months in Maine and a sudden recall to Washington for final assignment, I was speeding towards San Diego with John. The train got later and later. We could see that we were going to arrive at one of America's most crowded cities near midnight, without room reservations anywhere. The time had come for a conference, we conferred. Then we beat a strategic retreat to the club car and surveyed the situation.

Our choice of victims soon narrowed to a personable young man enjoying a Scotch and soda.

We flanked him and ordered similar beverages. A conversation started, and after the second refill we extracted from him the information that he had reserved a suite at the El Cortez Hotel. Before long we had a cordial invitation to share it with him.

When we reached the hotel a sleepy clerk told us that no rooms were available, so we registered and went to our friend's suite. As soon as we got there I phoned to the desk in pretended indignation and complained that we had been put in with a total stranger. He was apologetic, and moved us to rooms that suddenly "happened to be vacant."

I had a shower and wandered down to make a tour of our new quarters. In the cocktail lounge a girl was playing the piano, while half a hundred service men and officers grouped about her, singing. Upon the roof, in the Sky-Room, a blackout failed to hide the crowds of people standing at the bar or sitting at tables looking out over the moonlit bay. I went down again, sent a telegram to announce our safe arrival and retired to bed. John had retired long before.

We had been told to report to the Commanding General of the Marine Corps at Camp Callan.

I had been given a letter to him, in a big white envelope stamped SECRET in glaring red letters. I had worried plenty about where to hide it, wondering what would happen if it fell into the hands of some unauthorized person. Now it was with unbounded relief that I realized that in a few hours I could deliver it.

Early in the morning I phoned Camp Callan. Something was wrong. The clerk with whom I talked told me politely that it was an army base; not a marine there anywhere and certainly no marine corps generals. I tried other camps. No one knew anything about us. No one, apparently, wanted to. Last of all I called the Red Cross Field Director at the Broadway Pier in San Diego. When he had eliminated the Marine Base and one or two other likely possibilities he contacted the right base, Camp Elliott. So we went out.

Our uniforms were supposed to be there, but they had not arrived. Looking like a couple of interlopers we called on General Marston. He seemed rather baffled, even after he had read the SECRET letter, which was merely a simple statement of our names and our status as Field Directors. What was our function at his camp, he asked



us. Were we assigned there permanently? They already were taken care of. I suggested mildly that we were bound for overseas duty, and was told in no uncertain terms that no overseas movements were contemplated. Finally I wrote out a wire to National Headquarters and the General sent one to Marine Headquarters. It was a full week before it was established that we were to go somewhere, sometime, with an unnamed Marine Corps unit.

Meantime we were more than busy. For one thing our uniforms, made to measure in New York, were so badly fitted that extensive alterations had to be made in mine and John's tunic was so tight that we had to discard it entirely and buy another. We had plenty of wires and telephone calls from Washington, with orders and counter-orders. One phone call came through at five A.M., because someone back there had forgotten that there was three hours difference in time between the two cities. The best wire I got simply read "Please expedite full information concerning parachutes." It had to come through the Marine Corps office, and caused plenty of excitement, for unknown to anyone there was a detachment of paratroopers being trained to accompany us.

I was completely at sea about how to interpret the wire. I asked for an explanation and got none. Eventually, by mail, I got the explanation; whoever sent the wire had said "purchases" instead of "parachutes," but his handwriting was bad, and the secretary copied it incorrectly. We were up early every morning, making up lists of things we had to acquire through purchase or other means. One of the bellhops would bring us a pot of coffee and a plate of sandwiches at six and we would work until breakfast time.

In a week our relationship with the Marine Corps straightened out. We moved into officers' quarters at Camp Elliott and went into high gear. Getting acquainted with the officers of our outfit and ferreting out new lists of supplies we would need kept us going on the double. The question of playing-cards was a minor affair. To start with we had several hundred packs, but that seemed to me like a drop in the bucket. Men on transports, I learned, have only a very limited space available for recreational purposes; as often as not only the narrow width of a bunk. At the same time they have plenty of spare time on their hands. Morale is apt to slip if they have nothing to do. Of all

games which can be played in a limited space cards are most popular, so I went on acquiring them until I had eleven thousand decks to take along. That sounds like a lot, but as it turned out I could have used twice that number to good advantage.

All men going overseas are supposed to be supplied by the Red Cross with "Comfort Kits" made by local chapters. These contain a sewing kit, a book, chewing gum, a shoe rag, shoe laces and a half a dozen other articles. The cloth bag which contains them, made of sturdy material, is very useful as a kit in which to keep toilet articles. In fact I have talked with men who are still using bags given them by Red Cross in China as long as five years ago. For some reason our marines had been overlooked in the distribution. I began an assault on the local chapter. They gave me a few kits. I started telegraphing, and for once got excellent cooperation, for soon boxes of kits began arriving from all over the country, from New York City, from Ohio, Texas, Virginia and many cities in California.

I had an idea that this material would be of far more value to the men after they had been at sea

for some time than in camp, where most of the articles could be purchased. The Colonel commanding our regiment agreed with me, so the kits were boxed and marked for shipment.

One thing I wanted was a recording machine, so that our men could send messages back to their families after they reached destination. A trip to Hollywood seemed in order, for the best machine available was made there. I asked a Marine Corps lieutenant to come along, and we went off on the early morning train. The salesman demonstrated a machine to our complete satisfaction, but when I began to talk about buying one he countered with questions about priorities, cash sales, delays of several weeks and a number of other objections. When I said that I wanted to have the machine hooked up to short-wave radio and a public address system he threw up his hands in despair. None of that stuff was available. Spike and I took turns arguing with him, while he made one phone call after another. At the end of three hours the complete apparatus, plus disks and spare parts, was boxed and in our truck, charged to National Headquarters with forty per cent knocked off as discount.

The same day, we went in to Los Angeles and found a large hardware store, where I bought a full set of tools; hammer, saw, axe, prise bar, and all the rest, together with about a hundred pounds of assorted nails. I would need tools for opening my packing cases, with which I planned later to build decks for our tents. I picked up in the same place a number of ping-pong paddles and balls (we could make our own tables, also out of the packing cases), several dozen assorted fish poles and reels, hundreds of hand lines, ten gross of hooks, some fish spears and nets and a complete assortment of wet and dry flies, plugs and spinners.

All the fishing equipment was for use at our eventual destination, for it was obvious that in the tropics men would not be able to do much in the baseball and football line, while fishing is good sport and relaxation in any climate. We might even have to depend upon our skill to furnish food.

The last purchase was fifty old-fashioned "sad irons." We would have washing machines along, but so far no irons. Even in remote outposts men



would be less likely to slump if they could occasionally put on a decent-looking shirt.

By this time our purchases had grown to enormous proportions. The owner of the store asked about payment, and I told him that I wanted to charge them to National Headquarters. Quite naturally he was a little sceptical about my authority to go that far, and sent a wire to ask if they would guarantee payment. I know that because of the difference of time the man to whom the wire was addressed would have left the office, so I suggested that while we were waiting we might as well have everything boxed. While that was being done we sat down and had a long talk. After an hour, he said, "We won't have to wait for the answer. Take your stuff along; I know you're all right."

At Camp Elliott we had these cases stenciled with our name and symbol and a number, so that we could find any box easily. The carpenters built boxes for all additional purchases. Watching them one day I saw a marine making himself a stencil. Apparently someone had been appropriating his property, for the stencil read simply: "THE HELL IT'S YOURS! PUT IT DOWN!"

There seemed to be no end to the items which

we needed. Shopping by jeep and truck made the problem easier, for we were some distance from San Diego. When I had time I went out with Captain ("Doc") Garrison, who was later to be my cabin-mate, helping him to buy flashlights, athletic equipment, shotguns and the thousand and one items on his list. As he purchased I made rough subtractions from the total sum at his disposal, so that he could keep track of the balance and go on buying right up to the last dollar.

I needed another assistant. One had been offered whom I refused because I felt certain that he would not fit into our program. He had never roughed it, and when I talked to him about bringing along a blanket roll he thought it very funny. "That's all right for you fellows," he said, laughing heartily, "you like that sort of thing. When we get where we are going you sleep on the ground; I'll go to a hotel." Realizing that he was dead serious, and feeling that hotel accommodations in Guadalcanal and similar regions would hardly suit him I allowed him to be assigned elsewhere. This left me shorthanded.

They flew a new man out, Dave Oman. He and John and I made a fine working team. We would

plan out a day, divide up the jobs, separate in three different directions and then reassemble late in the day loaded with parcels and information. When everything was boxed, stenciled and stored safely away, one of us would say, "I have an idea," and we would adjourn to the Officers' Club for a much-needed drink and more planning. Sometimes we would go into town and join our fellow-officers in making the usual rounds of the cabarets, most of which had fair floor shows, but usually we were too tired for such frivolities.

All at once we got orders to join our ships. I had decided that we should split up; one of us on each of three vessels carrying troops, not only to distribute our efforts more widely but so that in case one ship was torpedoed we wouldn't all be knocked off at once. Our supplies were divided among seven transports. Unless the Japs got our whole convoy we would still have material to work with.

I drew two cabin-mates, Doc Garrison and our Catholic chaplain, Francis Kelly, whom I called Frank right from the start, not through any disrespect for his cloth but because I liked him as a friend. There was a fourth bunk in the cabin. Frank had with him a packing case full of sacra-

mental wine and holy medals. Doc brought in most of his medical equipment, and I had two hundred pounds of assorted supplies under my bunk. That, with our three foot-lockers, made a full house, so our hand luggage was stowed in the spare bunk. Every time a callow ensign or second lieutenant was assigned to the cabin as fourth occupant we pointed out regretfully that there was really no room. We had our own bathroom and shower, which was a wonderful break. The only catch was that when the cabin lights were blacked out at sundown our electric fan went off too, and it was so stuffy after that that I could never sleep there. One of the ammunition boxes on the gun deck was my usual bed.

The electric fan was a handy number. Whenever the ship's laundry broke down, which was most of the time, we would wash our own clothes and hang them to the electric fan, where they dried in a few minutes. Then, with Frank's electric iron we would do neat jobs of "répassage."

Days now passed with amazing rapidity. Scuttlebutt, the crazy combination of gossip and rumor which always spreads through a ship, got completely out of hand. We were headed for the

Aleutians. We were going to New Zealand for further training. We were about to take off via the Panama Canal for England. We weren't going to sail at all.

In order to test the speed of unfounded rumor, I tried an experiment one day. "Did you see a nurse come aboard this morning?" I asked a marine. In half an hour everybody had heard about the "fifty nurses" who were to be fellow passengers, and for days afterwards strange faces kept peering into the sickbay to see where they were hiding themselves.

Every morning I went ashore right after chow and met Dave and John. All day we purchased and "acquired" last-minute necessities until late at night. Every night we took a landing boat back to our ships, under the barrage balloons, under the stars, with patrol planes droning overhead. Suspense built up until it was almost unbearable.

Then, one night, we sailed. Sailed quietly at sunset, slipping out with our escort vessels so unostentatiously that we were hardly aware of the change. We passed out of sight of land. I came out on deck from the lounge, where I had been typing out a report. As I stepped through the com-

panionway a terrific blast nearly lifted me off my feet, and a life-boat just ahead sagged in its davits and fell heavily against the rail. Chunks of metal rained around me. Attack? Not at all; just a gunner who swung his gun too far forward during practice firing. If one of those chunks had been an inch or two closer, my job would have ended there and then.

Dusk fell, and we churned steadily on. All of us thrilled at the thought of what might lie ahead. A poker game started in the wardroom and lasted until midnight. Tired out, we hit the sack and slept.

Two A.M.

“General Quarters! General Quarters! All hands to general quarters! Man your battle stations!” This bellowed over the loud speaker, followed by the scream of the alarm signal, general quarters sounded by the bugler and the screeching of sirens as the bulkhead doors below swung shut. What the Hell! We couldn’t be under attack so soon! But we staggered out, dressed in nothing flat and got to our stations. There we were “secured” and sent to the wardroom for coffee and sandwiches. What was going on, anyhow? Then orders

came through to report back to our stations, with full equipment and weapons, steel helmets and life jackets. We lined up along the rail.

The ship had lost headway and the moon had gone down. It was pitch dark on deck and silent except when someone fell over a guywire and cursed it heartily. At the order we climbed stiffly over the rail, loosened our cartridge belts so that if we fell into the water we could shed our equipment with a shrug of the shoulders, swarmed down the landing nets, dropped heavily into the landing barge and crouched against the gunwale. When our boat was full it sputtered into life and roared away into the darkness.

Hours of discomfort followed. Sometimes we stopped, pitching heavily, again we cruised in circles, then we would roar ahead, showered with spray. Some of the boys were mighty sick. As dawn showed on the horizon we were speeding towards a shadowy coast line. It grew lighter, we came closer. In the surf our boat gave a tremendous leap forward and grounded. We sprang out in water up to our waists, fanning out as we jumped to avoid being ground into the beach by the next forward movement of the boat, ran clumsily ashore

and dashed for cover. It wasn't Japan, we discovered, not even Kiska; just a practice landing at La Jolla. And for California it was damn cold!

All day we captured real hills from imaginary enemies. I carried stretchers laden with victims whose weight was as much of an actuality as their wounds were imaginary, until my arms were almost pulled out of the sockets. We ate emergency rations. Some of the boys gulped their highly-concentrated food too fast, and soon doubled up with stomach cramps. All very good practice.

The long day drew to a close. We were dirty, no . . . grimy is a better word, from head to foot, unshaven, crusted with salt and dust. Trucks began to arrive to take us back to town. A chorus of loud barking began in the ranks as a truckload of army boys passed, looking sheepish at this sudden reference to their nickname "dogfaces." Gosh, I was tired! Easing my pack off my shoulders I lay down in a convenient gutter. With the curbstone for a pillow I slept. It was wonderful!

More trucks arrived, but still we waited. I found Dave and John, and we hitchhiked back to the docks. It didn't do any good, though, for there were no boats yet to take us out to the ships, which



were now anchored in the stream. All our outfit got back, still no boats. Into the trucks again and out to the Marine Base. No boats there either. Back to the docks, where we finally located a sort of tug. However, when we reached the ship we found that there was no place to rest the gang-plank, so we had to go up the landing nets. I didn't know whether I could make it by then, but everyone else did, so I grunted and pulled and hauled until I tumbled across the rail. Something like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn going up the lightning rod.

After I got rid of my pack and belt and canteen and wet pants and field boots I didn't feel so heavy on my feet. By the time I had shaved and showered I was beginning to think favorably of an evening in town. My new uniform had arrived, and I was childishly anxious to try it out. Up to now it had been increasingly difficult each night to persuade the sentries on the docks to let me off, for they had orders that all marines must be dressed in their greens after six. To solve this and other problems, the Colonel authorized the issue to us of Marine Corps uniforms more formal than the khakis which we had been wearing.

As I dressed, one after the other of the officers dropped in to see that I had everything right. Finally I seemed to pass inspection, but Bob Smithwick didn't like the cloth belt which is usually worn. He brought me his Sam Browne, and finally we were off . . . to drink an Alexander apiece in the Sky-Room to the success of our next "voyage."

The weather cooled that evening. Towards midnight we strolled back towards the dock. Up until now there had been some doubt among the enlisted personnel as to whether or not they should salute Red Cross men. As a matter of fact, they could do so or not, just as they wished. If they did, it was a courtesy salute which we returned as a courtesy. Some would start to salute, then let the hand relax into a gesture of scratching their necks. It was a case of mutual embarrassment. Now, when we were in "greens" they finally made up their minds that we were officers, so they saluted . . . especially if we were carrying anything in our right hands.

When we neared the docks we were surprised to see that the ships were alongside the piers instead of being anchored in the stream where we

had left them. With dismay we saw cargo hoists hard at work. They were unloading! No one knew why. All my boxes were in the upper levels of the holds where they would be readily available in case of sudden need. It had taken constant supervision to bring this about, now everything was being snatched out and stacked in the warehouses. I managed to get my stuff put in one pile.

The loading officer looked tired and jaded. He had no idea why the unloading had been ordered. Sweat dripped from the men below as they heaved our miscellaneous cargo into cargo nets. Up forward, jeeps and trucks and other vehicles rose high in the air and were lowered to the dock. I went to bed feeling let-down. The next day the unloading continued. We were told of the new plans; sixty days more of maneuvers, in the desert. On paper a whole camp was laid out. Then, as the last cargo sling was lifted out the order came to load again.

The process of loading and unloading was repeated several times. It got screwier and screwier. Not until much later, at Espiritu Santo, did I realize how essential it had been. There would be no stevedores in the South Pacific, and speed in unloading would be absolutely necessary. So our

San Diego operations were one more rehearsal for a part of the later operation.

I started to collect socks from the local Red Cross Chapter, and from the office on the Broadway Pier. Opening one of the boxes months later I discovered a brand new office chair which some zealous member of my work party had packed by inadvertence. It was a nice chair, but hardly appropriate to the jungle setting. Wool socks, I was told, repel ticks, and white wool ones are double protection, for if a tick does happen to climb up a white sock he is plainly visible and can be liquidated. One store had a few wool ones, and I got enough for myself, but never used them.

First aid kits seemed a necessity, so I got hold of one for each of us and a couple of spares. One of the spares came in handy later, about a week before we went into Guadalcanal waters. It had been decided to send a Marine Corps captain and a few men by plane to make a secret landing on another nearby island, to see whether the natives were friendly and if there were Japanese in residence. They took one of the first aid kits along. Incidentally, after living in trees for several days

they got back to report that the natives were not friendly, and that there were plenty of Japs around.

One night, when it seemed that our departure must be only a matter of hours away, I got word that there were a hundred and twenty packing cases for me at the freight station; the last batch of comfort kits. Dave was out on a job. John and I went down. At that late hour we could not scare up a work party, and the cases weighed one hundred and sixty pounds each. They had to be hauled to the docks and loaded that night.

A phone call to a pal in the transportation section brought us a light truck and two drivers. While John and I pulled and tugged at the first case the freight agent smoked his pipe, and the two drivers watched in silence. We got it on the truck, then one of the drivers said, "We aren't supposed to shift freight, just drive, but what the Hell, let's get the job done." The freight agent pulled off his coat and offered his services, and soon those cases were literally flying through the air. Ten trips to the docks and back took care of them, and reduced us all to dripping roustabouts, after which John and I used our persuasive powers to get the boxes down in the hold with the rest

of our gear. It was near morning when we got through, but we knew that if we sailed now we had everything we needed.

We were wrong, as usual. Early in the morning I had an urgent phone call from a Marine Corps officer at the Marine Base. What was I doing about the bellyband situation? What situation? Well, cummerbund, if I liked that better. I hadn't done anything about them, hadn't even thought of them. He then explained what he knew from personal experience; that the wearing of a flannel band about the waist not only prevents dysentery caused by the chill of early tropical mornings coming into contact with bare human torsos but is an excellent preventative to concussion shock under fire, if tightly fastened. He gave me rough estimates of individual sizes while I did some figuring.

An hour later I was in a department store, asking the price of white flannel. (They had pink, but I rejected it for obvious reasons.) They brought out a bolt of the stuff and a pair of scissors, prepared to cut off a yard or two. "How much do you want?" the salesgirl asked.

"Three miles," I answered absentmindedly, for I was trying to check on my multiplication.

“What?” she asked sharply.

“Three miles,” I repeated.

With a frightened look she departed hastily in search of a floorwalker. By the time he arrived she had evidently explained the situation to him, for he was all sympathetic understanding. Patting me on the shoulder in a soothing manner he told me gently that everything was all right; if I would just go out in the nice cool air I would feel much better. Lots of people felt queer after being out in the hot sunshine, but I would soon feel better. It took some time to convince him that I actually did want three miles of the wretched stuff, but patience won and I bore it off in a jeep. Back on the ship some very sheepish corpsmen gathered in the wardroom and cut it into the right lengths and widths, to the accompaniment of coarse jeers and coarser remarks from their buddies, grinning through the doorways. They were plenty embarrassed, but a coke apiece helped out somewhat.

A new problem came up. I had been supplied with a check, to be used to pay our maintenance and for emergency purchases abroad. I had positive orders not to cash it before departure, but to deposit it in the bank as soon as I arrived at my

destination. Now that I knew more about our destination I went to the finance officer, who told me bluntly that a check out there would be of less value than toilet paper. "I can't cash checks or money orders or travelers' checks," he added. "Take my advice and bring cash, plenty of it. I'll get you a safe if you want one." So I deposited the check, and then drew most of it out in bills and cash. For an added precaution I had the bills issued in sequence, and left two copies of the list behind. For security reasons I could not inform National Headquarters of the real necessity for this step, and they were not particularly pleased when they learned through the return of the deposited check to them that I had violated my orders. It turned out that my informant was right, and if I had not had cash to work with later on my hands would have been tied at a time when quick action was essential.

More false alarms followed. Another departure by night ended in another practice landing on the California coast. Everyone who had shore leave rushed back to the docks every few hours to make certain that sailing orders hadn't come through.



By this time we had been living on the ships for almost a month.

Then, one night when nearly everyone was ashore, the word went round very quietly that something was doing at last. Drinks were left unfinished on tables and bars. Girls were heartlessly abandoned in the middle of dance floors with the orchestra still playing. In five minutes the main street leading down to the ships was jammed with marines and sailors and their officers, all hurrying, no one talking. In an unbelievably short time everyone was aboard, and at midnight we began to move slowly away from the city which we had come to know so well—and from most of our laundry, for at the last minute everyone was so certain that we wouldn't be pulling out that all sent it out. By the light of the stars we could see the dim shadows of the other transports, now familiar figures, and the new silhouettes of cruisers and destroyers which stole up out of the darkness to join us. A new life had begun for all of us, a new life so orderly and well-disciplined that it was always difficult to believe that this was actually "the real thing" and not just another rehearsal. The truth is that the many rehearsals of each phase

had readied us for the final push-off, so it was done without fuss or excitement, with all the familiarity of something which we had done many times before.

Charley, a colored mess-boy, kept our cabin more or less clean. His name wasn't Charley, but we had been reading Damon Runyon; which gave us the idea of christening him Good-Time Charley, because of his cheerful disposition. He was nearly always in trouble. Sometimes because he couldn't resist the temptation to stop and chat with anyone who would listen to him, which kept his activities in the bed-making and chambermaiding line down to a minimum. More often because of his proclivity to bring double or treble helpings of dessert to the officers he liked and to pass up the others entirely.

At first there was considerable friction between the mess-boys; fights and scuffles and wordy abuse, despite the efforts of the steward, Reverend Smith, to soothe them by a combination of a heavy hand and Biblical quotations. Charley told me one day that all of them were just crazy about a game called Monopoly. To his amazed delight I was able to dig into my box and pull one out, for the

exclusive use of the mess-boys. From that time on they were lambs; hurrying through their work so they could get back to the game. They played it constantly, winning enormous sums of stage money from each other.

Enlisted men were not allowed to play cards for actual money; in theory, at least. If they had money showing during a card game it was confiscated by one of the ship's officers. So they played for matches and settled with each other privately. One boy had an exceptionally lucky night at poker, ending up with a roll containing fifteen hundred dollars. He stuffed it into his pants pocket and went to the latrine. In three minutes he was back, with the most woebegone expression on his face that can be imagined. The roll of bills had fallen into the bowl and been flushed out to sea. Easy come, easy go.

At my table in the wardroom was a warrant officer, "Felix" Price. He had been in the Marine Corps for most of his life; a real old-timer who had seen action in just about every part of the world. We hit it off at once. He was on gun watch, and after the first day I stood all his watches with him. Eight in the morning until noon, then from mid-

night until four A.M., then four in the afternoon until eight and so on. Our watch was on the hurricane deck, where it was always cool, and where we were free from the coating of soot which the night watch astern got when the ship blew her tubes after dark.

On the midnight watch we would get up fifteen minutes early, dress in not more than forty seconds, put on steel helmets and grope our way along the passageway to the wardroom. In the darkness there was always danger of collision with someone coming silently from the opposite direction until I hit on the expedient of holding my left hand in front of me with the luminous hands of my wrist-watch facing forward. Once in the wardroom we sat down at the table. A few officers who had come off watch early were drinking coffee before turning in. In a corner Captain Chapman was always reading, oblivious of our presence. He was always there. When he slept, if at all, was a mystery. We would wait a minute to get our eyes accustomed to the light and then shout for the watch-boy, who would appear from the galley rubbing his eyes and bringing us hot coffee. Then

we would step out through the blackout doors into pitch-black darkness.

Carefully, we would feel our way with groping feet across the deck to the ladder and ascend. Then across another deck, stepping high to avoid tripping over two cables, up another ladder and across the hurricane deck. Our eyes were still not adjusted to the darkness, for though we could hear men moving all about us we could see no one, just an occasional silhouette outlined for a moment against the starlight. We would call out "Red," and the man whom we were to relieve would answer from the darkness, cursing us cheerfully. We would chat for a moment, then he would go below.

Gradually our eyes would adjust themselves. We could see the gunners in their turrets, the signalman standing at the rail, the talker with his earphones, the long cord of his telephone trailing behind him as he walked from station to station, murmuring to the officer on the bridge above the monotonous refrain "Aye, Aye."

Millions of stars reeled back and forth across the sky. Other transports to port and starboard, leading us and following us, swiftly moving shadows hurrying through the night. Sometimes we

made a game of trying to identify the accompanying ships, each of which had a slightly different superstructure; again we tried to locate certain stars. We talked in undertones, unhurried, relaxed. There wasn't much to do except to check on the gunners from time to time to see that they were on the alert. Once in awhile we pushed the button which signaled them to ready their guns, and were delighted when all the guns on the ship could report themselves to the bridge as manned and ready within forty seconds.

Sometimes, when we were relieved, I went down to the cabin, had a shower and hit the sack, but more often I stretched out on one of the ammunition boxes on deck and slept there until dawn. Someone asked me after my return home whether that wasn't a dangerous place to sleep, but we were carrying amidships an enormous supply of ammunition, the stern was covered with barrels of aviation gasoline and the bow contained fuel enough for our own use and for a number of destroyers. If anything had hit us, no part of the ship would have been safer than any other.

During daylight watches we rigged up a wire from the top of the stack to the deck, with a cigar

box hung on pulleys sliding up and down, for target practice. The weapon we used was a Lewis gun connected to a compressed air hose and firing a burst of BB shot. Hitting the swiftly moving box as it slid down the wire presented the same problem of "leading" as firing at a plane, so that the bullet and the plane would arrive at the same point simultaneously. Occasionally our own planes dived at us so that we could grow accustomed to the sight and sound, and so we could aim with empty guns. Sometimes we pulled out of the convoy and fired at a sleeve towed by one of our aircraft.

We hurried on, quickly losing all track of time. As soon as we were well out I went down into the holds where the marines lived and ate and slept. They were pretty crowded, with tiers of bunks reaching up to the ceiling. About all the change they got was during the half hour or so a day that each group was brought up on deck for physical training exercises. That meant that everyone had a great deal of spare time.

Lectures by officers to small groups covered such subjects as the nature of the enemy, terrain, the use of contour maps, tropical diseases and

other pertinent topics. Weapons were cleaned and oiled frequently.

I remember listening to one officer talking seriously to his men. He was squatting on the deck, with a semicircle of marines seated facing him, warning them of the dangers of the tropics, particularly problems of disease and infection. He told them that the natives they would encounter would be Melanesian; black, many of them diseased. "Remember, men," he concluded, "when you have been away from home for a few weeks more those native girls are going to look less black all the time."

"Captain," drawled a pleasant Texan voice, "some of 'em look mighty nigh white to me right now!"

It took a couple of days to find what kind of recreational material the men wanted most. Cards, acey-deucey, poker chips, checkers and cribbage, for the most part. Most of the games in the standard deck kits received from Washington were of no use because playing them would take up too much space in the overcrowded quarters. Things like dart boards and deck quoits, for example, I put away for later use.



Books were scarce, so I opened up a few hundred of the comfort kits and removed the books, making a small library where men could draw out reading material and exchange it. Each group had its own assortment of games, which I replenished on request. It got so that there was someone at the door of my cabin almost any hour of the day, wanting a pack of cards or a checker board or a book or some poker chips. As fast as I emptied one packing case I nailed back the top, had it carted to the hold and brought up another. Playing cards wore out fast, especially when played on rough decks. If I thought a poker game was getting stale I would slip in a pinochle deck and watch the expressions of the players as they laid down their first hands.

I kept the officers' lounge supplied with games, too, and set up a small library for them. Sick bay needed chiefly cigarettes, chewing gum, books and bedside bags; with additional games for the G.U. ward. The ship's crew had their own recreational boxes, which I had got from Red Cross before leaving San Diego. Their recreation officer handled those supplies. Altogether, between standing watches and attending staff meetings and lec-

tures and digging out supplies I didn't have much spare time, which was perfectly swell.

It was a perpetual source of wonderment to me how calm everyone was. At table, conversation was casual, leisurely, dealing with anything but military subjects. At the daily staff meetings, problems of offensive tactics were thoroughly discussed, and careful studies made of tropical foods, climatic conditions and native populations. Each officer made it a practice to spend plenty of time each day with the men directly under his charge, so that he could learn more about the individual characteristics of each. There seemed to be a very fine relationship between officers and men, and between the Colonel and the other officers. It had to be that way, because later, in action, they would have to cooperate fully at all times in order to achieve their objective.

Our chow was varied and excellent. Plenty of good meat and fruit and vegetables, tasty desserts, ice cream every day. Movies daily for both troops and officers. It was Doc Garrison's job to swap movies we had shown with other ships, using a destroyer as the go-between. But too often he forgot to check on what we were getting in return

for our used reels, with the result that during one week our marines were shown two Shirley Temple films and one Buck Rogers. The next swap didn't work; we got our original three back, and had the pleasure of seeing them all over again.

To most of those aboard our destination was still a carefully guarded secret. It seemed logical at first to choose Hawaii as our first port of call, but by striking an average between zigs and zags while watching a compass they soon found that we were headed far south of Pearl Harbor. Guesses prompted more scuttlebutt. Someone "knew for certain" that we were going to New Zealand. Others backed the theory that we were to be stationed at Christmas Island, which at that time lay dead ahead. But as days passed, guesses grew more fantastic and found fewer supporters.

We crossed the Equator. Most of the usual ceremonies and horseplay were omitted on our ship because of the necessity of keeping a sharp outlook for enemy planes and subs, but I found out later that on John's ship the boys who hadn't already been initiated got a thorough going-over. All we got was a Neptune certificate to take home, and a small card showing that each of us pas-

sengers had been admitted to the ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP. The latitude given was 00' 00", longitude SHHHH! and our purpose and destination set down as "BOUND SOUTHWARD TO SET THE RISING SUN." A corpsman with a set of watercolors decorated my card with a glowing sunset and a few dolphins scattered here and there, adding greatly to its attractiveness.

Still we went on, almost forgetting that anything existed in the world except a vast expanse of sea dotted with ships all hurrying in the same direction. Flying-fish skittered from wave to wave. Great white clouds sailed ahead and behind and over us. Rain squalls moved erratically here and there, sometimes blotting out part of the convoy. Long hot days, long silent nights, and always the feeling of inevitability, of something big coming.

Then, late one afternoon, we sighted land. First, tiny palm-covered islands, then larger ones and finally a dimly-seen coastline on the horizon. At this point we were told that we were approaching Tonga Tabu, in the Friendly Island group, and that we would anchor there for several days while one of the carriers accompanying us made some minor repairs.

A breeze sprang up, rapidly increasing in intensity until half a gale was blowing. We threaded our way through the mine fields and finally dropped anchor about a mile offshore. It looked very peaceful in there.

As it grew darker the gale increased. During our watch it was almost impossible to stand upright on the hurricane deck, so great was the force of the wind which screamed through the rigging and dashed quantities of spray into our faces. We were dripping wet, our faces badly wind-burned, by the time we were relieved.

A wild scene greeted my eyes the next morning. Dozens of little fishing boats had been blown from their anchorages and cast ashore on nearby islands. Some of them were smashed to bits, and groups of disconsolate natives, drenched to the skin, squatted on the shore waiting to be rescued. The wind was still high, and I noted with some alarm that all our ships, including my own, had dragged anchor. Some were as much as half a mile from their original anchorages. Within a couple of hours we had moved back where we belonged, without casualties. Word got round that the Colonel and a few officers were going ashore. I

asked and obtained permission to tag along, for I wanted to contact John and Dave and have a talk with them. I sent a flash message to each, asking them to meet me somewhere.

A heavy sea was still running. We went down the swaying landing nets and scrambled somehow into the Higgins boat. Waves broke over the bow, drenching us all, but particularly the Colonel who had not brought his raincoat along. We were a sorry-looking crew when we climbed out on the beach and squelched along towards the Officers' Club. My sun helmet had gone over the side and sunk immediately.

None the less, we felt very happy to be on land again, with a warm sunshine removing part of the chill from our wet bodies. Dozens of little native boys, stark naked save for tattered service caps which they had picked up somewhere, lined up at our approach, saluted us gravely and gave us the island words of greeting, "Malo lelei, bongi bongini." The barelegged traffic cop, whose only garment was a scarlet vala, also saluted, showing perfect teeth in a smile of welcome. (New Jersey State Police please copy.) Even the driver of a

dung cart saluted as he passed, seated on top of his steaming load.

At the Club we found canned beer, a piano going full blast, plenty of naval officers. It was pleasant, but not good enough to hold us there with the whole island to visit. Not seeing anything of John or Dave, I inquired my way to the Kolosi Kula (Red Cross) headquarters, which turned out to be a rambling bungalow gradually sinking into the spongy soil, surrounded by palm trees. Inside I met the Field Director, Edwin Holmes, and his two assistants, Bill Tait and Ralph Burke. Also the three girls who did the office work, who were usually locked in the back room when they had work to do so that the crowds of visitors, officers of all ranks and plenty of privates and non-coms, would not entirely prevent them from typing and other activities.

Bill Tait took me out in the car, and we soon rounded up Bill and Dave, both of whom were a little punch-drunk with the scenery. We went back to the Club and obtained permission from the Colonel to stay ashore overnight. We had seen just enough of the place to make us want to see it all, and at any rate a conference was in order.

Bill Smith, owner and proprietor of the Fairfield Boarding House, had a room for us. At his table that night we learned something of the history and customs of the island.

As soon as the first American troops landed, Smith told us, the Queen took all the unmarried girls to live "out in the bush." She also took with her a turtle alleged to have been given to one of her ancestors by the famous Captain Cook, who is said to have introduced to the island the first of the pigs which now run wild everywhere. What the original breed was is hard to tell; those found there now are small, black, shortlegged and very tame. They seem to have a great fondness for coconut sprouts, and spend most of their time rooting under the trees.

A typical native feast includes guests, wreathed in flowers, sitting cross-legged in a circle, with a half-roasted pig in the center, flanked by baskets of fruit, roasted tara root and yams and a sweetish pudding. Lovely girls, also flower bedecked, fan away the flies. American guests enjoy the sight but often jib at the pink pork. Trichinosis or not, a good time is had by all.

The Queen had given an order that no bananas



or coconuts are to be sold to the American troops; on request they are given all the bananas they want, and as for coconuts, all they have to do is to pick up a good one from the thousands lying on the ground. Our boys soon learned that unripe ones have a surprisingly laxative effect. Doc Garrison brought a huge bunch of bananas aboard and hung them in the middle of the room to ripen. Then he brought in forty or fifty coconuts. The cabin began to look like a jungle hut, so Frank and I gave the bananas to the mess boys and heaved the coconuts out through the porthole. No doubt they floated to barren islands and are now growing into new plantations.

We had a long visit with the Red Cross crowd that night, returning late to the boarding house, feeling our way through the sticky black mud in a complete blackout. There were only two beds in the room, both singles. We flipped a coin, and John lost, so he parked on the floor while Dave and I doped off in cots complete with mosquito nets and creaking springs.

Loud giggles woke us in the morning. It was the native maid, bringing our morning tea. She was laughing so hard that the tea was slopping

into the saucers. We laughed, too, when we looked down at John. During the night, to keep off the mosquitoes, he had rolled himself tightly in his sheet, even covering his face. Now, looking like an animated mummy he rolled back and forth trying to extricate himself.

At breakfast we met a retired British army officer who for some years had been an official in the island. He told us a story of Japanese propaganda efforts prior to the war which interested us very much. It appears that the Japs asked permission to open a trading post, and were refused by the native Parliament. Then they appealed to the British, and finally were allowed to start a small shop. They built a fine building and filled it with trade goods of excellent quality.

Tongatabu law says that if anyone extends credit of more than two pounds to a native the debt is not collectible; this to prevent exploitation of labor. However, the Japanese gave unlimited credit, and even urged their customers to charge more goods. At the close of the year they called all their customers together and got out the account books. Then, with much ceremony, they destroyed them, and sent everyone away with a

handsome present and a cordial invitation to return and charge more goods. They also gave to the wives of the local Parliament members Christmas gifts of expensive kimonos. So effective were their tactics that when they were taken away for internment at the outset of the war the natives saw them depart with real regret.

The natives are a simple, friendly folk; deeply religious in a Wesleyan Methodist sort of way. There are also quite a few Mormons among them. On one occasion when missionaries were soliciting funds to carry on their work in Fiji all of them gave all their money for that purpose, for they felt that the Fijians, their traditional enemies, were probably in great need of refining influences.

Their life is delightfully simple, real South Sea Island stuff straight from Hollywood. Their huts, beautifully woven from palm fronds and grasses, take only a day to build. When they tire of their neighbors they can always move and build a new one. The Queen owns all the land, but every boy is granted eight and a half acres for life, when he is sixteen. He clears out all the useless trees, leaving only those which will produce edible fruit. Thus, without planting, he has bananas, oranges,

lemons, sugar cane, yams, kava, papayas, custard apples and pineapples. Fish are plentiful in the sea and in the lagoon. Pigs are easy to catch, and some of the neighboring islands contain wild cattle. Clothing is made of tapa cloth, formed by beating strips of bark into thin sheets which are glued together with plant juices into a large piece of tough, durable cloth. Stained in original designs with other juices, the cloth serves as clothing, bed coverings and rugs.

The British tax of six pounds a year is met through the sale of copra; in fact the chief purpose of the tax is to encourage the production of that valuable commodity. The boy starting out in life on his own land simply lays ripe coconuts on the ground in the clearing and walks away. In a few years he has a thriving plantation producing more nuts than he needs.

During the next few days Holmes and his two assistants took us all over the island. We saw the Flying Foxes, large fruit-eating bats which roost in only one grove, and are supposed to be the spirits of the dead. Occasionally they migrate to another island, and have to be lured back by offerings of various sorts. We watched native women

beating out bark into tapa cloth, and examined the interiors of many huts. In between sightseeing trips I visited the few stores, finding them almost without exception almost bare of goods; a rusty hinge here, a bottle of Lydia Pinkham there; nothing that we needed.

Going farther afield in search of poker chips I came upon a Post Exchange several miles back in the bush, where they not only sold me a hundred boxes but treated me to a bottle of beer, set out on a rustic table under a very decorative arbor.

Our troops stationed in or near the town of Nufualoka seemed contented; they had baseball games and other sports and a fine, mild climate. Those stationed on lonely outposts, watching night and day for an attack which never came, had a really tough time, until Holmes and Tait and Burke fitted up a truck with a loud-speaker and drove out nightly to put on variety shows for them. "Major Bowes and His Gang," the boys called them, from their habit of encouraging amateur talent from the audience to join the evening show.

Red Cross was also handling the army library, most of the outdoor recreation and the welfare

problems of men who were worried about their families at home.

During our stay all the marine and naval personnel of our outfit got four hours liberty ashore. They had a swell time, riding horses or bicycles hired from native owners, fraternizing with the army, buying beads and tapa cloth and baskets, picking up a few words of the local lingo to spring on their friends at home. Some bought postage stamps as souvenirs, others applied for and received licenses made out in their names entitling them to drive cars on the island. The fact that they had no cars did not detract from the value of the licenses as mementos.

From a few cents a square yard the price of tapa cloth rose rapidly to such fantastic heights as twenty dollars for a small piece. But the sellers didn't care much what they got; twenty cents or twenty dollars; it was all the same. Most of them had already great wads of United States currency which they couldn't spend because there wasn't anything they could buy with it.

John and Dave and I had several serious talks. They too knew by now where we were going, and just about what our chances were of getting out,

so we planned what each should do in case the others got knocked off by a sub or a plane or a shell fragment. We also made a new and better division of our supplies, and laid out everything ready for instant use.

In between jobs we picked up a few words of the language. It was simple and musical. At first we contented ourselves with such words as:

please	fakemalemale
I don't know	heilo
sleep well	mohe lelei
goodbye	nufua
Island	Tonga
sacred (forbidden)	tabu
skirt	vala

and the like, but later we even learned such abstruse expressions as:

aku tahi	a kick in the pants
kava	the island drink
	and
si-si	neck wreath

On our last day we managed to get a quart of (warm) Australian beer from Bill Smith and took it out to a cafe to drink it. The daughter of the

proprietary, Lily, a half-caste, whom we had seen doing pseudo-Hawaiian dances at the Officers' Club, came over and asked us whether we would like her to sing for us. We agreed, and she went over to the tinny piano, where, to a thumping accompaniment, she sang, of all things, "Carry Me Back To Ole Virginny." It was "colossal"! Shortly afterwards we boarded our ships again, laden with grass baskets of fruit, tapa cloth, sea turtle shells and other souvenirs.

In my cabin was a tall, lanky stranger in glasses who introduced himself as Dick Tregaskis. He had been assigned to our cabin as a fourth occupant. We liked him so much that we didn't have the heart to pull the same story about overcrowding which had kept out other invaders, and soon his long legs were hanging from the top bunk as he told us about the Coral Sea battle, Midway and other engagements which he had witnessed.

Eventually we got to asking each other where we had come from, and Dick turned out to be an Elizabeth, New Jersey, boy; the same as I was. He had also gone to my old school, Pingry, so an entente cordiale was already under way when we went to the wardroom for our first meal. The mess-



boys gasped when they saw his size, but when they saw the size of his appetite they were too amazed to do more than stare. He was either making up for lost time or storing up for lean days ahead. He was a nice guy, and in a few days everyone on the ship knew and liked him.

From time to time destroyers from our convoy came alongside to take on fuel from us while both ships continued ahead at full speed. They would shoot over a rope, which in turn was attached to a heavy cable. Once secured together, we would lower the oil hose and start the pumps. When the first of these came alongside they asked if we had any bread, for they had no way to bake and had for a long while been without the staff of life. We passed them sacks of loaves fresh from the oven, and I called down to ask whether there wasn't something else they wanted. "How about some ice cream?" called one of them facetiously, but the joke was on him, for we actually had plenty aboard and slipped them several cans of it. While they sat on their deck, eating it, I went below and got out a large laundry bag which I filled with playing cards, books, candy bars, sewing kits, chewing gum, dominoes, cigarettes, checkers and cribbage

boards. I slid the bag down the cable to them and watched their expressions of amazement that they should find a Red Cross station right out in mid-Pacific. Many times later I repeated the act with other destroyers, with the same laundry bag. One time the destroyer slipped away before they could empty the bag, but two days later another ship tossed it aboard, neatly ironed and with a note of thanks pinned on.

I had been learning the Japanese language. Lieutenant Boardman, who had been a cabin-mate of mine while we were waiting at port, asked me to join a PFC, a corporal and a sergeant in learning enough of rudimentary Japanese to enable us to question prisoners . . . if we took any. For a couple of hours a day he gave us oral and written exercises until we couldn't possibly forget the words he had taught us. At the end of each day's lesson I always had a splitting headache, but at the end of the course we were equipped to find out a man's name, rank, regiment, place of origin and a great many other details . . . provided we could make him talk. The lieutenant was in favor of the gentle approach; the offer of a cigarette, the use of polite forms of speech and the like rather

than forcible measures. He had a gentle nature himself, but an exact and penetrating mind. When he had an hour to himself in the evening he would walk slowly up and down the deck carrying on complete conversations with himself in Japanese, for practice. The mess-boys didn't like it at all; they said it gave them the creeps to have that kind of talk coming at them out of the darkness. It did sound spooky, at that.

Speaking of mess-boys, Charley had been in to see me again and again to ask whether he couldn't come ashore with us when we landed. He offered to carry anyone's gun for him or do any other odd jobs, just so he got a chance to fight. It wasn't up to us; he was Navy personnel, and anyhow it would be his job to help get the wounded aboard when we had casualties. We suggested that he take the matter up with the Skipper, but he didn't seem enthusiastic about approaching that dignitary.

We were headed North again, and finally entered the Coral Sea. There used to be a dance tune by that name, back in about 1920, a smooth, easily-flowing melody, very restful. Not a bit expressive of the Coral Sea that we sailed through.

We thought of the battle which had been fought there so recently, and of our own impending attack, growing closer every day. Precautions were redoubled. We had had a rendezvous with the rest of our convoy, and now in every direction ships crowded the sea to the very horizon and beyond; transports, destroyers, cruisers, carriers and other types. Now came the dress rehearsal.

For two days we bombed, shelled and landed upon the little island of Kora, following the plans later to be used in Guadalcanal and Tulagi. We learned the effect of coral beaches on the landing boats, how best to land tanks and trucks and jeeps and made other discoveries. Some of the boys, returning to the ship, told strange tales of finding tame chickens and dogs and goats on the seemingly uninhabited island. Some even brought puppies back almost to the ship. They were annoyed when told to throw them overboard until they learned that the island had housed a leper colony, who obligingly departed in order to allow us to use it for practice attack. Those boys couldn't get to the showers fast enough after that, and nearly took all their skin off in trying to scrub off any infection they might have picked up.

Now our plans were complete. We had studied maps of Guadalcanal and Tulagi and Florida and Gavutu and the smaller islands of the Solomons group. The landings had been timed, the shelling planned to the exact number of shots to be fired by each fighting ship. Men had been assigned positions in landing barges, emergency rations had been issued, everyone dressed alike in dungarees, without insignia, so that there was no difference in appearance between officer and man. American fighting men had already learned that the Japanese had a habit of sniping at officers first, so as to disorganize the troops. Without insignia, and with a rifle instead of side arms, an officer would stand an equal chance with his men.

The night of the attack, Felix and I were on the midnight to four watch. Our convoy had given the southern Solomons a wide berth and by-passed them, so as to return and attack them from the North. If by any chance word of the offensive had leaked out, the enemy would naturally expect us to come up from the South. With so large a convoy, which had been so long en route, it seemed impossible that they should not know all about

our plans, but we hoped that the element of surprise would be a factor in our favor.

Knowing that the cards were probably stacked against us, we were tense and alert as our convoy split into two segments just before reaching Savo Island, one half passing to its north and proceeding towards Tulagi and the other, our half, going south in the direction of Guadalcanal. It was shortly after midnight, and a bright moon lit up the water. Savo stood out plainly, a dark mass outlined against the sky. We knew that it was heavily fortified, probably with five and six-inch guns. We slipped by, ship after ship. Nothing happened. Not a sound, not a challenge. Suspense became painful. At any moment we might hear the crashing explosion which would indicate that we were discovered and attacked. In our present position we were extremely vulnerable. Still nothing. We sped on, out of sight of Savo and into the waters off Guadalcanal.

There again we expected to be blasted by Japanese gunfire from the mainland, but as we slowed and stopped there was not a sound. For two hours we lay there, straining our eyes to catch some sign of activity from the dark shore. A couple of lit-

the fishing boats, their crews undoubtedly asleep, rocked gently in the light swell between us and the shore.

Then, at the exact second previously agreed upon, sheets of flame burst from all the fighting ships simultaneously, followed by the deep roar of gunfire, echoing and re-echoing from the black mountains beyond the shore. It was unbelievably beautiful. Oil dumps and stores burst into instant flame, sending up enormous clouds of black smoke. The planes based on the island never got off the ground. Flash followed flash from the cruisers, while the destroyers strutted up and down the coast for all the world like bantam roosters, crowing defiance.

The fishing boats, hit in the first burst of firing, caught fire and sank rapidly, the crews swarming up the masts like ants. They didn't last long. The motor torpedo boats, which could have raised Hell with our transports, were hit before they could get under way.

For more than a week our observation planes had been making reconnaissance flights, photographing and mapping all installations and giving us a daily report on the progress made by Japanese

laborers on the airfield which was later to be Henderson Field. Therefore the gunners had their targets well marked before they ever got near the Solomons. They did a swell job!

When Felix and I came off watch the firing was still going on. Below, boats were being prepared for the landing. Everybody was tremendously excited, but all who were going in on the first wave showed pleasure rather than apprehension that they were to be among the first to land. The boats were lowered, filled and sped away to the rendezvous areas. We lined the rails, watching them.

It grew lighter, and we could see them lined up ready to start, with the silver amphibians wallowing behind, ready to follow. All at once they were off towards the beach, trailing long white streaks of foam. Feeble gunfire started from shore, then ceased. Drifting smoke and spray hid them from view before they reached their objective, but we knew that they had made it and established a beach-head, for soon the empty boats came roaring back for another load. The navy crews were exultant as they climbed aboard for coffee. Everything had gone off according to plan. Only one casualty; a man who jumped back when the shore



guns sounded off and got a half-inch cut in his back from the bayonet of the man standing behind him.

As more marines went ashore we started unloading. Our ship held the reserve battalion, which was retained in case of emergency in either the Guadalcanal or the Tulagi theatre. Everything seemed to be going well on Tulagi, even though the Japs succeeded at first in jamming our radio communications. We were feeling pretty cheerful.

At about eleven, with the unloading progressing smoothly, we were stopped short by the horrible shriek of the alarm signal, the screaming of sirens as the bulkhead doors swung shut and the belled order over the loud-speaker: "General Quarters! General Quarters! All hands to General Quarters! Man your battle stations! Stand by for an air attack!"

We hit our stations on the double and stood by. In a few minutes we would be under fire, most of us for the first time. It was an unpleasant sensation. I looked around. Probably everyone was uncomfortable, even apprehensive, for the unknown is always upsetting, but every face wore a dead-pan expression which defied interpretation. Minutes

passed, then a cry went up, "Here they come."

A perfect bedlam of ack-ack burst loose; coming from big guns and middle-sized guns and from the Lewis guns. The dive-bombers, seventeen of them, were apparently bewildered by such heavy fire from transports, for after their first attempt to knock us off they withdrew; those which could still withdraw. We went back to unloading, feeling perfectly swell. Our first attack had been over in a few minutes, and no one the worse for it.

At two that afternoon another formation of dive-bombers came in, and this time things were pretty hot for awhile. Again they pulled out, and again we experienced a sense of physical well-being and pride in our outfit. Again we went on unloading.

Boatloads of ammunition, food and stores of all sorts were rushed to shore, carried back into the bush and roughly camouflaged. Marines waded naked into the surf, lifting heavy crates and boxes out of the lighters so that they could run in closer to shore. When it grew dark we turned on deck lights and shore lights, chancing the danger of being attacked again in order to get the precious stores to the place where they were most needed.

No one slept that night. Lights were flashing from the black Guadalcanal mountains, answered by flashes from Tulagi. It was the Japanese commander, ordering a new attack. It came in the form of a quick rush in the darkness over in Tulagi by Japanese long-distance swimmers who had come through the water from Florida Island, armed only with knives. They jumped our boys in the darkness, did considerable damage and were repulsed with some difficulty.

We went on unloading. By now we were more relaxed, less ready to grow tense at any unexpected noise. Just after noon, however, our complacency was badly shaken by another general quarters alarm; another air attack coming, probably from Rabaul. The ship started moving immediately, following her sister ships in an intricate zig-zag pattern in the twenty-mile space between Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

A half hour passed, an hour. Nothing happened. Nerves were tightened to the point where we felt that something would snap unless we got going soon. Then a shout, "Here they come!", and from the most distant ships came the rattle of gunfire, swelling as it spread from ship to ship

until our own guns burst forth to join the now deafening chorus. Heavy explosions shook the air, smoke drifted across the decks from belching muzzles of all sizes. Swooping down over the low hills until they were only a few feet above the water came forty torpedo bombers. They were met by a hail of shells of every calibre, and seemed almost to pause, bewildered, before roaring in at the transports. One plunged into the waves, exploding as it hit the water, then another and another, while cheers rose above the roar and rattle of gunfire. The rest kept on coming. One came straight towards our ship, so close that we could see the bullets from a Lewis gun marking patterns on his windscreen. On and on he came. He was going to get us, come Hell or high water. Then something big hit him, there was a flash and a terrific explosion and he disintegrated into thin air. Another plunged sullenly into the waves just off our port beam, its trail of black smoke suddenly extinguished as it splashed heavily into the sea. The closest actually got one wing over our rail, trying to climb aboard as it fell, but at the last second it side-slipped and fell astern.

There was nothing for me to do on deck; I went

below. As I left I could see Major Springer, his cribbage game for once forgotten, calmly recording the scene with his movie camera, while on the other deck a photographer snapped stills of the oncoming planes, using a sky filter which brought out the ack-ack bursts nice and sharp.

Down below I lay down in the alleyway, face downward, stomach slightly raised above the deck, as we had been trained to do in order to prevent concussion shock when the ship was hit. It was damned uncomfortable, and the firing sounded louder, more alarming, now that I couldn't see what was going on. I thought of the marines below, with nothing to occupy them but speculation as to how we were making out. Really that was the toughest job, just waiting. Finding some chewing gum in my pockets I crawled around passing it out to the men lying about me, waiting with their stretchers in case they were needed. One elderly officer was squirming and writhing on the ground. "Are you hit, sir?" I asked anxiously.

"No," he grunted, "It's this damn rheumatism of mine. Always gets me when I lie down!"

With one final terrific blast the guns were silent. The whole ship was silent. No one moved. Was

it really all over? Then softly, like a caress, came the boatswain's pipe, and the "Secure from General Quarters!" over the loud-speaker. We rose stiffly and clumsily to our feet, fumbling to undo the chinstraps of our steel helmets. The voice of the Skipper came over the speaker clear and distinct: "This ship has shot down five torpedo bombers. In all, the fleet has shot down thirty-five out of the forty which attacked. Well done!" A moment's silence, and then everyone let loose. The cheers that rang out outdid anything I have ever heard in the Palmer Stadium or the Yale Bowl.

Each of us had a sense of physical well-being such as we had never before experienced. Life was mighty good. Coffee, when the watch boy finally got it warmed up, was the most delicious drink in the world. And a cigarette to top off with surpassed anything we had ever known.

Everybody had a story to tell. One was about Charley, our mess-boy. Instead of passing up ammunition he had started up the ladder to see what this war looked like. As his head came above deck level one of the Japanese bombers roared straight at him, so low that it barely cleared the stack.

"Lawd, remember we's still yo' chillun," he bel-  
lowed, and dived head first down the hatchway.

When the Colonel came down from the bridge, from which he had watched the whole action, he was as excited as any of us. On deck, the gunners were involved in endless arguments as to who had hit which plane. In the middle of the discussion we heard a rumor which brought us out on deck on the double. In plain sight, clinging to the wreckage of a plane drifting by, was a Japanese pilot and two of his men. Our ship tried to maneuver close enough to pick them up, but missed by a considerable distance. Then a destroyer made a try, whereupon the Jap pilot started shooting at it with his pistol. The one-sided duel didn't last long, for suddenly realizing that he couldn't escape capture he shot his two men and then himself. That ended the spectacle.

One of our boys who was very indignant that he had had to stay below while action was going on suddenly blew his top and emptied the contents of a forty-five into the body of a Jap, somewhat dismembered, which was floating by. Our decks were sprinkled with empty shell casings;

rubbish and wreckage of all sorts covered the surface of the water.

The transport next to us, which had been belching intermittent puffs of smoke, now burst into flames. In the action we had seen a bomber roar straight at it, planning no doubt to launch its torpedo and then go up over the superstructure. It passed us so close that we could see the pilot suddenly fall over in the cockpit, dead from a bullet. His plane, without direction, kept going straight ahead and crashed on the deck of the transport. Gasoline from the ruptured gas tank trickled down into the hold and burst into flames.

For a time the crew kept the fire under control while they got their stores off. The fire died down, and was almost extinguished when it suddenly burst out again. All of the crew except the few who were killed when the plane hit them got off safely. We watched as she drifted, burning brightly now, onto the beach. She was the only transport we lost.

Aboard our ship our one casualty was a gunner who was trying to hit a plane coming in so low that in order to hit it he had to shoot away his



own rail. A splinter hit him in the shoulder, causing a slight injury. He got the plane.

This seemed to me a good time to distribute comfort kits to the marines aboard. They would soon be landing and would find the supplies useful. Those who were ashore had either received their kits already or would soon get them. Our boys were mustered on deck by companies while I passed out the little bags. For some reason they got the idea that the folks back home had already heard of the engagement and had sent out these gifts to show their satisfaction at the good news.

At that point I ran into a snag. The navy gunners didn't say a word, but I knew that they were thinking that they, too, rated kits. When we finished with the Marines I started in on the gun crews, but soon stopped discriminating and saw that all the Navy men were supplied equally. One kit was at each officer's place at table in the ward-room at chow that evening. We were all pretty happy. Our initial success seemed too good to last. It was!

I worked that night, mostly in the hold, until nearly eleven, when I went topside for a breath of

air. The sky was overcast, and a light drizzle was falling; so I was quite surprised to see one bright star shining directly overhead. It seemed to be growing brighter. It was growing brighter! In a moment it lit up the whole area upon which it was descending, and it dawned on me that it was a flare, dropped by a plane which could only be Japanese.

The rumble of gunfire broke out on all sides as the brilliant light flickered and died, the sound constantly shifting in position. We were again in motion, zigzagging up and down. The fighting ships, we knew, were guarding the northern approaches to our position. Their job was to keep the enemy away from the transports. How big an attacking force they were meeting was more than anyone could say.

Sleep was, of course, impossible. Here was a battle going on all around us, and we had no way of knowing how it was coming out or whether it would presently engulf us. It seemed to circle us several times, if we could judge by the sound and by the dim flashes. We spent an anxious night. If one Japanese cruiser got in among us we would be caught with our pants down.

When dawn broke a cruiser limped by, a gaping hole in her bow as if a giant had bitten out a great chunk. We signalled to ask what had happened during the night, but she did not reply.

Confused rumors began to drift in. We had sunk the whole Japanese fleet. We had lost all our fighting ships. The battle had ended. It was still going on. At last the real dope began to reach us, and by noon we knew for certain that we had lost three United States cruisers, and one Australian cruiser.

Word came to me that survivors were being brought aboard one of our sister transports. I decided to go over and see what was needed. I had thirty-five cases of comfort kits dropped into a landing boat and went over. It was very rough, and by the time we reached the ship it was rolling heavily. I started up the nets, but halfway to the rail the ropes securing the net broke loose and I swung out over the water, clinging with all my strength to the rough ropes. The next roll slammed me against the hull with a thump that wrenched one leg and twisted an ankle, but I took advantage of the period when the nets were against the hull

to scramble up higher, and after one more hard bump I made it to the rail.

The sick bays were overflowing with wounded and burned men, and every deck was covered with more casualties. Ambulatory cases sat wherever they could find a clear space. No cries or groans. Even men with ears burned off or lips half gone were helping the corpsmen. The Executive Officer of one of the cruisers, one arm and an ear terribly burned, walked about, chatting with his men.

We got my cases on deck. To avoid missing anyone we called the roster of all survivors, and everyone above decks got a Red Cross Comfort Kit. We took the ones for men in sick bay to them. I was far more moved by the way the men received these insignificant gifts than by their injuries. A few dollars worth of gifts from "the folks back home," but somehow it conveyed to them the idea that those for whom they had gone through such hell the night before were right with them, fighting side by side.

There was much more that they needed at once: clothing, razors, tooth brushes, sweaters, socks. I made more trips back to my ship and brought over all the gear I could lay my hands on.

Joe Custer, of the United Press, was down below, with one eye bandaged and the other practically sightless from a hit by a shell fragment. He was about my size, so I fitted him out with some of my clothes. His chief worry wasn't his eyes, but his inability to write his story. We got a yeoman to take it down in shorthand and type it out. Even though there wasn't any way to send it out yet, he seemed to feel much better. A Life photographer who was uninjured mourned the loss of his camera. "The best shots I ever took," he said, "lost before I could even develop them."

I began to hear accounts of the battle. The most moving story concerned one of our cruisers. She had been hit many times, and was burning and sinking. Those still aboard were grouped in the bow and stern, for amidships the decks were nearly red hot. Soon they must jump into the water, risking the sharks and exploding depth charges. As the ship slowly settled a destroyer came up out of the darkness, made fast to the bow end and took off all the men there. She then went around to the stern, but just as she was about to take off the remaining men her sound apparatus picked up a submarine. Her first job was to get the sub.

She backed away. "Sorry, boys," someone called, "we're going out to get that sub." And the men left behind, looking at the black, shark-infested waters, cheered as she disappeared into the darkness!

Other stories came to my attention as time went on. A negro mess-attendant, picked up after several hours in the water, had a rough bandage about his arm. No one paid much attention, for everybody was busy. For several days he helped in sick bay and elsewhere, but finally, seeing a doctor standing by he said, "Doctor, I think there's something in this arm." An operation removed from his shoulder a piece of shell fragment as large as the palm of a man's hand. Almost immediately he began cleaning and polishing the jagged piece of metal. "What is it?" I asked him. "I don't know for sure," he said, grinning, "but I think it's a small Jap salvo."

More disquieting news had come in while I was away from my ship. Twenty-two Japanese submarines were reported on the way to Guadalcanal, coming from Truk. That was the pay-off. It was decided to take the wounded and the partly-unloaded transports back to Espiritu Santo, in the

New Hebrides, for safety's sake. By the time we got under weigh some of the subs had already arrived, and we departed to the accompaniment of exploding depth charges on every side.

I sent flash messages to Dave and John, asking them to contact me when we got to our destination. Dave's ship flashed back that he had gone ashore with the marines at Gavutu, a small island near Tulagi. Lieutenant Horner had just finished telling me of his own experiences there, when he went in the first day of the action.

Japanese snipers had wounded a corpsman who had gone in unarmed and with his Red Cross armband plainly showing. The Lieutenant drove up near him to take him back to the ship. When he arrived close to the wounded man he sent another corpsman, also unarmed and with Red Cross armband, over to pick him up. That man was shot through the head, at close range. Apparently it was Japanese policy to disregard the Geneva agreement.

That, and other stories from Gavutu showed me that opposition there was tough, and I worried about Dave, for I knew that he would not be looking for a safe berth when there was a job to be

done. What actually happened was this: Dave volunteered to help with the job of bringing in the wounded. One corpsman after the other was killed or wounded, but he was unharmed after many trips out into the open. Some of the wounded, in foxholes, were so badly hit that it was not safe to move them until they had had a doctor's care. Dave accompanied the doctors during the night. When they went down into the foxholes, he held blankets over the top so that they could operate by the light of their flashlights. His position was entirely exposed, but he continued until the job was done. I haven't seen Dave since the last day at Tongatabu, for he is still over across the Pacific as I write this and I am on a ship going in the opposite direction, across another ocean, but when we do meet I know that one of us is going to say "I have an idea," our own way of suggesting a drink, and if we don't talk ourselves out after that it won't be our fault.

We steamed slowly south along the Guadalcanal coast. I will never forget how the island looked at sunset; first the beaches, then a backdrop of palm groves, then the dark mountains, green towards the bottom but growing blacker until they



disappeared behind lacy curtains of white mist. It was unbelievably beautiful . . . but I heard no complaints about leaving it.

The dull boom of exploding depth charges showed that the destroyers were still working on the subs, but some of the underseas craft followed us more than halfway back to the New Hebrides. Many times their projectiles missed one or the other of our vessels by a scant few yards. After they were safely behind we slowed momentarily while flag-draped bodies were slid overboard, solemnly committed to the silent deep. It was appropriate that they should rest here where they had made their last fight.

We dropped anchor opposite Espiritu Santo. I went ashore, for I was completely out of razors and other gear for the wounded. To my dismay, all four of the shops were closed and padlocked, to prevent their contents from being bought up within a few days by army and navy personnel who could get along perfectly well without the contents. I had to have supplies, and my time was limited. Just then along came Chief, the jovial Chief Pharmacist's Mate. Was he acquainted yet with the owner of the biggest store? Of course, he

had been ashore a couple of hours, and by now knew most of the Frenchmen in the vicinity. Would he introduce me? Certainement!

We met the storekeeper and had a short chat. We passed the usual amenities. I discovered that I had visited his natal village in France some years ago. We grew chummy. Then I expressed my deep regret that the front door of his shop was padlocked by the Army. He looked at me shrewdly, raising an expressive forefinger. "Aha, mais il y a une porte de derrière." So we went in the back door.

On the floor were dozens of huge ten-gallon bottles of wine, wicker-covered dark glass. But on the shelves were all the commodities I needed; many gross of razors, cases of tooth paste and powder and shaving cream and soap, a bewildering array of tooth brushes of all makes and colors. At first he hesitated, surprised at the size of my orders, but when I told him that they were for "les Blessés" he shrugged his shoulders and withdrew all objections. We packed the gear in boxes, I paid him out of a great wad of bills which I had withdrawn from the safe and joined him in a glass of wine. Then he called some Indo-Chinese boys,

who carried the boxes down to my boat. Before I left I shook hands with my new friend and thanked him heartily. "But," I asked, "how will you explain where all your goods have gone?" He wrinkled his brow in thought. Then his face cleared.

"Tiens," he smiled. "On m'a volé!" ("I have been robbed!") And we left it at that. I had the gear we so badly needed, he had his money and the authorities had (I hope) a plausible explanation.

The razors in particular were received with acclaim when I got them back to the ship. Many of the survivors had been unable to shave for days, and had been more worried at this departure from their customary habits of neatness than over their lack of clothing and other necessities. But now each one had a razor and a tooth brush and the rest of the usual toilet articles. They had clothes of a sort, too. It might be army pants, marine corps shirt and a navy cap, but it didn't matter a bit. Most had shoes and underpants. We were making progress.

John came aboard the next morning, looking pale and tired. Later, I heard from officers in his ship, both Marine and Navy, that he had been as

useful as any officer aboard. It was swell to see him again. One of the doctors gave us each a shot of medicinal brandy, which I must admit we needed by then, due to lack of sleep and general fatigue. We soon went ashore and walked along the road bordering the beach. Despite the trucks and jeeps and other vehicles which dashed by, raising great clouds of dust, it was peaceful there. Little wavelets broke lazily on the shell-strewn beach. Cows browsed here and there in the clearings. Natives, chiefly Melanesians; black, ugly, misshapen, red-haired, waved in languid fashion. The red hair, which surprised us at first, is not natural; it comes from putting quicklime in their black, wavy hair to kill the lice. Shades ranging from salmon pink to auburn contrast strangely with black faces and bodies.

We met Frank Kelly and two other Navy chaplains. They were on their way to visit Father Jehan, who had lived in the Island for more than a score of years. Their real purpose was to explain to him some new depositions from the Pope regarding masses for troops held at off-hours. None of them knew much, if any, French, and they asked me to come along and interpret. I agreed, although ex-

plaining my almost total lack of ecclesiastical French vocabulary.

Father Jehan turned out to be a gentle, intelligent priest; tall, thin, courteous. We entered his cottage and seated ourselves about his table. Each of us had the same thought at the same time, and presented him with some of the cigarettes and chocolate we had brought along. He seemed quite moved. Then we talked, shifting from French to pidgin English and then to what Latin we could muster up. Also with a glass of California wine apiece which our host insisted on pouring for us. Eventually we made the thing clear.

We asked him about the disease problem, and were told that there was a great deal of malaria, blackwater fever and dengue. Yaws were common, elephantiasis not unusual. He had taken quinine every day since he lived there, and had kept in good health. We too had been taking quinine, eight grains a day, for some weeks now. Because of the varying rate of absorption of the pills and the possibility of capsules not holding up under tropical conditions we had been taking it in the form of quinine sulphate powder. The empty casing from a forty-five shell, with a handle sol-

dered on, formed a scoop which held exactly the right dosage. Every marine was given his dose, dumped into a spoon, just before evening chow. If he didn't take the quinine, he didn't eat. It was nasty stuff, but we soon grew used to it. Only Felix, who had had malaria several times in the past, rebelled. Quinine made him violently sick, so after several more tries he gave it up.

Father Jehan was very much concerned about the school at Espiritu Santo. Due to shipping conditions they had no paper or pencils. When I told him that American Red Cross had plenty of both and would send them in he was greatly excited. John and I talked it over and decided what to give the school, and a letter from John nearly a year later told me how he had brought in several gross of small pads, about five hundred small pencils and a number of boxes of colored crayons. It happened that we had a surplus of each and could well afford to share them with someone who had a real need.

We discussed the possible fate of other Marist priests who had been in the Solomons when the Japanese first moved in. Some of these were French but a number were American. Some, we

knew, had been killed; the fate of the rest was in doubt. As we chatted we walked about the priest's farm, looking at his dairy herd and admiring the little ice plant installed in the yacht which took him to the many other islands in his parish.

We mentioned that our ship was out of fresh fruit, and he offered to find guides who would go with us into the jungle, where we could get all we needed. We got hold of a jeep, and soon he and John and Frank and I were driving along a faint trail through the bush with two hideous natives clinging to the sides. They had apparently been indulging in the common practice of bathing in rancid coconut oil, but in spite of their beauty treatment their skins were repulsively scaly, and little creeping things occasionally peered out from their matted red hair and darted back again into cover. The trail ended, and there was not even a vestige of a path. They pointed in one direction or another and we drove as best we could towards the indicated spots. Once we stopped to pick some Sea Isle cotton growing in a large patch, and to examine cocoa pods entirely hollowed out by rats. It was hot and humid as we penetrated deeper and deeper, under giant trees with fantastically twisted

roots and vivid green foliage. Not a sign of a habitation or a clearing.

Finally we stopped because there wasn't any way to go further. Our way was barred by a dense thicket. The black boys gathered a number of sacks from the back of the jeep and silently disappeared. I cut a young bamboo with my hunting knife and sat down on a log, idly carving a cane. Mosquitoes buzzed around our ears under our sun helmets; otherwise the eerie stillness gave us the impression of being watched. The feeling grew so strong that I slowly raised my eyes without moving my head. Only a few yards away a dwarfed, misshaped figure, heavily bearded, was peering out from behind a bush. As his sharp eyes caught some slight movement he vanished completely without a sound.

Other strange figures peered at us from various points of vantage now and then. These people might be, as we had been told, fine friendly folk, but after all it was not so many years back that they were cannibals. I tried to figure whether we looked juicy and tender enough to tempt them to revert to the customs of their ancestors, but gave it up.



Our boys reappeared as mysteriously and silently as shadows. They were carrying bulging sacks of lemons, oranges, tangarines, papayas and bananas. Pineapples were not yet ripe, or we could have had them, too. We drove back carefully so as not to lose our top-heavy load. Safely back to the coast we gave each of the boys a dime for the fruit and the trouble of gathering it. They seemed to be delighted.

A destroyer lay alongside the ship when I got back. Its crew was calling up to us to ask if we had any "porgy bait"; their name for candy bars of all kinds. A swap began, a handful of Japanese money for one candy bar, a Jap gas mask for two, and so on. A brisk trade was carried on for about an hour. Most of the money was of the "occupation" sort, cheaply printed in English as one shilling notes. It didn't say who would pay the one shilling. Yen notes, shabby and worn, were few.

That same day I went to the Colonel and asked him if he could arrange to get some Red Cross supplies to the men on Guadalcanal and Tulagi; chiefly cigarettes, for word had reached us that the fighting men wanted those more than anything else. He thought we could work it, so early

the next morning John and I started out in a boat and went from ship to ship, buying all the cartons they could spare from their stores. By mid-afternoon we had more than thirty thousand packs. We put them in a warehouse, under guard and dug up a comfort kit apiece for our marines ashore. Scouting around in the bush we managed to locate most of our gear which had been brought ashore. Of this we added half a ton of chocolate, several thousand packages of chewing gum, a few barrels of soap and other odds and ends which we thought would be useful.

Some of these were put on P-T boats carrying ammunition and aviation gasoline up to the battle area; the rest went up by night on one of our ships. It had been completely unloaded, and went up with open hatches, all the cargo to be landed packed into cargo slings, so that it could be emptied in a few minutes. I heard later that the supplies got there, and were greatly appreciated by the men who were doing such a swell job of establishing and holding a beach-head and starting the drive inland which was eventually to drive all the Japanese forces from the islands.

About now I transferred the balance of our cash

to John, together with most of the remaining supplies, and put him in charge of Red Cross activities until such time as Dave returned, when they could operate jointly. I felt that my job was with the survivors, who were ready to be taken back to the United States. I transferred to the ship which was to carry most of them, said goodbye to John and to those of my regiment still available and went aboard. John had been a real friend, loyal and dependable, and some of the officers were already closer friends than people whom I had known for years. I wasn't very happy as we drew away from Espiritu Santo and out towards New Caledonia.

We had a quiet voyage down to Noumea; no more excitement than a few submarine scares. More of our casualties could be brought out into the sunshine every day. They were more relaxed, and as a consequence some who had been outwardly calm up to now began to suffer from the after-effects of the experiences they had been through; a kind of delayed shock. They needed to be pulled out of it. Some wanted to talk the whole thing out; others wanted to forget it by losing themselves in a book or being entertained in

one way or another. The books I had along went fast, and were read to tatters in short order. Almost anything in the reading line was welcome; but Westerns, detective stories and light novels were most popular. "Topper" was a prime favorite, with all except one officer, who read it gravely from cover to cover and then handed it back, saying seriously, "The writer of this book seems to be a psychopathic case. It doesn't make any sense to me."

Ten miles off Noumea we dropped anchor. I was tired to the point of exhaustion. All the way down I had been distributing books and games and other supplies, getting clothing for those who were not yet fully supplied, planning entertainments, typing letters and reports and lists for those who were not able to use their hands, sleeping when I could between jobs. The sight of land, with purple mountains reaching up from the port, made me feel that one night ashore, sleeping in a stationary bed for a change, would do me a world of good. The boat dashed in through flying spray which lashed the faces of the few who were going ashore, and finally deposited us on the little dock.

I went on alone to find the Red Cross headquarters.

What I found was a little building on a corner of a dusty street, opposite a park criss-crossed by slit trenches. Inside, one room with a few tables and chairs. A scattering of very old magazines and newspapers. A phonograph, silent because there were no more needles. Service men playing checkers or writing letters. One man gazing raptly through the open doorway into another room where a girl in uniform was typing, and murmuring to himself "A white girl from home! Boy, I'm going to sit here all day and just look at her!"

In the office, Mabel Bryant, sister-in-law of Bill Wright, who had been my instructor in the training class in Washington. She looked tired and not too well. She said that the Field Director had flown over to Australia for supplies. If I wanted to, I could have his room overnight. She went over to the French hotel where the room was located, and got the key from the proprietor. I went up, found some Scotch and helped myself to a drink. I needed it. Now that I was for a day or two away from responsibility I found myself very tense, over-excited, unable to relax. The whis-

key helped, and I stretched out on the bed while Mabel sat by the window and told me about the set-up in New Caledonia. I gave her what news I could of Bill and her sister, and promised to tell them to send out some blouses and other clothing which she needed. After awhile a man came in who had been in my training group.

His job in New Caledonia was to drive over almost impassable roads in a truck, carrying a movie projector and films to isolated outposts, where he put on shows for the men. In mud and rain he made the tour of the island; then returned for a shave and a night's sleep and new films before starting out again.

After a long talk I was somewhat rested, and we went down to dinner. The meat was, as usual in New Caledonia, venison; tough and stringy because lack of refrigeration equipment prevented it from being hung for more than a day or two. The Red Cross personnel went back to the office, and I set out for a stroll. There wasn't much to see. As it was growing dusk I met a colored boy who had been blown out of his ship into the water during the Battle of Savo Island. He wanted very much to talk about it in order to get straight in

his mind exactly what had happened. We walked for a couple of hours. When I returned to the hotel it was dark, the iron shutters bolted fast and the door locked. I knocked and banged and called but no one answered.

A couple of M.P.'s came along. They too knocked and called without rousing anyone. At length they hailed a truck and took me to a tent down near the beach where some of their friends from the Quartermaster Corps were sleeping. A couple of hasty introductions in the darkness, and I pulled off my clothes, climbed into a cot and fell into a sound sleep.

When I awoke in the morning two of my tent-mates were still sleeping. The third was breaking up boxes outside and building a fire, while two little children watched him eagerly. Soon he had a pot of coffee simmering, and flapjacks browning in a skillet. It brought back sudden nostalgic memories of dawn at Strawberry Lake, in eastern Oregon. I got up, but my face didn't feel right. It was stiff, and didn't seem to fit. A glance into the mirror showed me how very wrong it was. During the night, mosquitoes had dive-bombed me, and my features were swollen beyond recognition. I looked

like hell, especially the upper lip, which stuck out like a projecting roof over my chin.

Two mugs of steaming coffee, followed by flapjacks with syrup and a bowl of oatmeal made me feel, but not look, much better. I washed and shaved and dressed. The other boys were up now, and wanted to know all about the Guadalcanal action. We had a good talk. When I was leaving, one of them said, "Drop in again, but next time pull down the mosquito net." I did drop in again, with a few books and candy bars and some cigarettes as an expression of thanks for their hospitality.

My experience reminds me of the well-known story about New Caledonian mosquitoes, probably true. A marine sleeping in a tent woke up to hear two mosquitoes talking about him.

"Shall we carry him outside, or eat him here?" asked the first.

"Let's do it here," said the second. "If we take him outside, the big mosquitoes will take him away from us."

I found a barber shop and got the barber to put various lotions on my lip, but none of them helped much. While I was there I decided to



have my hair cut. The barber started in, and before long he was using seven pairs of scissors, one by one, and more than a dozen pairs of clippers. Whether he was putting on an act, or just following his usual procedure I didn't know, but by the time he had finished he had about twenty admiring spectators squatting on the floor watching him. For all his care it was a lousy haircut.

I needed more playing cards. The Post Exchange sold me a few dozen packs, which was all they could spare. Mabel Bryant gave me some; also some games and five hundred cartons of cigarettes. At the French stores, after exhaustive argument, I got the proprietors to reduce their price on cards to about half, but even that was very high. I also stocked up, from the P-Ex, with razors and tooth brushes and other accessories. Some of the wounded we had brought down were being transferred to the hospital ship, and replacements from the New Caledonia hospital were coming aboard.

The ship's recreation officer gave me phonograph needles for the Red Cross phonograph ashore, and some magazines. The steward gave me five dozen eggs, which I turned over to Mabel.

Eggs in New Caledonia were extremely scarce and were about a dollar apiece.

My last day ashore several friends planned a party for me that evening. I went to the dock to see if there was any possibility of the ship pulling out during the night. No one knew for certain. The only way to find out was to go back and ask the Skipper. It grew very rough on the trip to our anchorage, and by the time I learned that we would definitely not pull out before noon the next day at the earliest, the sea was too rough to permit the launching of a boat. In fact, the gangway was smashed by the last boat out from shore, hurled against it with terrific force. So I missed the party, and didn't get to shore again, for the next afternoon we sailed.

I had two cabin-mates now, an electrician and an engineer; both nice guys. They didn't mind my keeping all my supplies in the cabin, where they would be handy, nor did they object to the constant stream of callers who kept dropping in all day and most of the night to get needed articles of one sort or another.

Almost every one used the indirect approach. "Are you the Chaplain?" they would ask. When

I denied the accusation they would turn away, then come back. "We heard that someone or other was giving out razors." Usually a little questioning would bring out the fact that they needed soap, too, and a pair of pants and a couple of books. One or two naval officers wanted black ties to go with their uniforms, such as they were. I had a few snappy numbers picked up in a New Caledonian haberdashery which served the purpose.

Only one man complained about anything, but he complained all the time. He was past middle age, and had broken his leg badly in saving a shipmate's life in the engine room of his ship. Now he could limp about, but he would always be lame, and was being let out of the service. That was what he was complaining about. "Why, Hell, I'm worth ten of the young fellows," he would say bitterly. "And I can get around faster, game leg and all."

The chaplain put on frequent shows and entertainments, with which I helped whenever I had the time. In one boxing match, the highlight among many such events, the two contestants knocked each other out simultaneously in the first half-minute, and were carried unconscious from

the ring to a thundering chorus of boos and cat-calls. Another favorite event was a sort of free-for-all in which eight men, blindfolded and armed with clubs made of wadded newspapers, were put into the ring. Each had a soda cracker tied to the top of his head; the last one to have his cracker knocked off being declared the winner. Some of the hits and near misses were terribly funny.

We worked out a new way of distributing cigarettes during boxing matches. In the interval, two men would stand in the center of the ring and begin tossing packages into the crowd packed tightly about it. Anyone who caught more than one immediately threw it to someone else, so for ten minutes or more the air was full of smokes and everyone got a good stretch before settling back for the next bout.

Word got around that we would put in at Pago-Pago, and for once rumor was not unfounded. We dropped anchor in the late afternoon. I went ashore and found the Red Cross Field Director, Edgar Reeves; a nice guy, since invalided home. He took me to dinner with the Army, and on a preliminary tour of the base. The next day we shopped; getting from the Army enough socks to

take care of those aboard who were still short. Reeves dug out of his stores all kinds of articles that I had been unable to obtain elsewhere, including a guitar, several dozen mouth organs and ocarinas, a ukelele, writing paper and more toilet articles.

We drove around part of the island in order to see some of the hospital units and scenery. Where hospitals had been erected near native huts the huts had been left undisturbed. The sight of native women and children using the outdoor showers built by our troops was a common sight. I had no chance to get over to British Samoa, where I had been told there were some interesting souvenirs to buy, but I asked Reeves if we couldn't find a boat model to take back to my son. We walked to the outskirts of the town to a shady place where two native women were seated, carving little boats. I picked out the one I wanted and haggled over the price. When we reached a figure which suited both buyer and seller I offered to pay, but she pointed to a tent. "Pay him," she said.

I entered and found "him," an enormously fat man, naked except for a loin-cloth, sitting on the

ground playing poker with some of his pals, similarly attired. With one hand he waved a palm-leaf fan to keep away the flies. A bottle of beer stood beside him. He took the money, grunted and went on with his game. A tough life!

Some of our passengers had been looking forward to a drink or two in Pago-Pago; but nothing was available but beer, and only a couple of dozen bottles of that. Not that it mattered much one way or the other; the things we couldn't get were always the things we talked most about.

We sailed again. On the second day out I went topside to have a sunbath for the first time in months. I stripped and lay down in the warm sunshine. Just as I relaxed, BRRRRRRING!, off went the general quarters alarm. In ten seconds I was dressed and on my way to my station. We stood there. Everybody's face looked suddenly old, tired. What the Hell was it this time? False alarm? No such luck; a Japanese cruiser!

Our escort consisted of two destroyers, one badly battered. They started out at once to meet the enemy. We waited in tense silence, lined up along the rail with life jackets and steel helmets

on. So far on our way home and this had to happen! If the cruiser came on and opened fire we didn't have the ghost of a chance.

No one could say afterwards what happened. Perhaps it was the brave show of defiance on the part of our destroyers, or perhaps the Japanese thought we had some other and larger warships hiding out somewhere nearby. At any rate, they turned tail and went away without so much as a shot fired, and we resumed our homeward course after some extra-fancy zigzagging.

I looked up the man for whom I had obtained the guitar, and asked him to come down to my cabin. When I handed the instrument to him he was absolutely speechless with delight, and started right in tuning it. In a few minutes he was playing and singing "Wabash Cannon Ball." He was good! From that time on he spent most of his time playing for the men in sick bays and on deck. Someone who gave a few dollars to American Red Cross had made a fine contribution to the happiness and morale of our fighting men.

All the survivors were making up long lists of the possessions they had lost when their ships

went down; these lists to be submitted to the Government for reimbursement. My typewriter was going twenty-four hours every day. Sometimes I did the typing, but more often several yeomen would take it in shifts. We got up mouth-organ contests, with the instrument as the prize. In that way we dug up lots of unsuspected talent. Ocarina contests were amusing, especially when some of the contestants tried out the odd-shaped noise-makers for the first time.

In some ways our perceptions were dulled. We had seen too much action in a short time to get excited over trifles. As an example of how disinterested we were in events which would formerly have excited us I think of our prisoner. He had been convicted of murder and was being brought back under guard. Every morning he was taken on deck for half an hour's exercise. One day when we were standing along the rail looking out to sea he suddenly jumped overboard and started swimming towards the nearest land, which was about seven hundred miles away. His guards began shooting at him with their rifles, but missed.

A boat was lowered, but a roll of the ship



smashed it against the hull so hard that it had to be taken back aboard. We signalled to one of the escort vessels to pick him up. They maneuvered close and dropped a boat, which pursued him, caught up, overpowered him and took him aboard. They asked to have a boat sent over for him, but we signalled back, "You keep him." And during the whole show no one watching showed the least sign of interest.

There was a piano in the lounge which was used occasionally. One night a sailor came up to play for us, and about a hundred men gathered about it to sing. The room was blacked out except for a tiny blue light in the ceiling. All that could be seen were the white bandages on heads and arms. Song followed song as we stood there; all the old barber-shop favorites, a few modern songs; mostly the old ones that everyone knows. Past midnight, as a closing number, we sang God Bless America. The words rang out full and clear, and as it ended there were unashamed tears in many eyes. Those men knew what the war was all about. They had fought well, and would fight again, those who were able, to defend the country they

loved. Some of them are now back in action, some are still in hospitals, some have died. But living or dead, the fine spirit they showed will live on.

It was growing cooler. I dug out enough sweaters for all the survivors. One naval officer, Don Levy, with whom I had been playing Monopoly nearly every night, received one made by the Princeton, New Jersey, Chapter of American Red Cross.

"That's right next-door to my home," he told me in pleased tones. "I live in Trenton."

"Well, I live in Lambertville myself," I put in. "It makes us practically neighbors."

One morning Captain Greenman sent for me. He and the other officers of the cruiser were in pretty good shape by then. He presented me with a letter, written on behalf of both officers and men, expressing their appreciation of what I had been able to do for them. It is a letter which I will always keep, but their thanks should have been directed not to me but to the American people. They made my work, and the work of all other overseas Field Directors, possible through their contributions.

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(COPY)

USS ASTORIA DETAIL,  
August 29, 1942.

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L \*

Mr. Alfred S. Campbell,  
Field Director,  
American Red Cross,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In behalf of the surviving officers and men of the U.S.S. ASTORIA, I wish to express to you our deepest appreciation of the assistance rendered by you and by the American Red Cross to our personnel at a time when all were practically destitute of the essentials for health and comfort.

Not only did you supply us with sufficient Red Cross kit-bags for each officer and man when they were sorely needed, but you collected from shore and other sources, razors, tooth brushes and other necessary toilet equipment which added extensively to the physical comfort of all, and particularly the wounded.

\* So designated because at the time the loss of our 3 cruisers had not been announced.

By copy of this letter, I wish to advise the Head of the Military and Naval Welfare Service of the Red Cross of your timely aid and the initiative you displayed in procuring equipment which added much to the comfort of our officers and men.

Wm. G. Greenman,  
Capt. U.S. Navy,  
Commanding, U.S.S. ASTORIA.

On and on we went, losing track of time, forgetting almost that any other life existed except the one we were leading. Movies every night and most of the day. Food running out, meals getting smaller and less varied. Then we came into Pearl Harbor. Passing through the mine fields we had an opportunity to see plenty of evidence of the December seventh blitz. Those of the damaged ships not yet back in the service were in the process of being reconditioned. Bubbles of oil still oozed up through the water, wreckage still lay on the shores.

We were told to transfer to another ship for the last leg of the voyage home. New clothes and outfits for everyone were waiting on the docks.

As the men went down the gangplank those who could walk unassisted carried only one piece of luggage—their Red Cross kit-bag. The ones who went off on stretchers held their bags in their arms. For the moment those little bags represented their total possessions.

I went up to the Transportation Section of the Navy and asked what ship I should take. They seemed puzzled that I had no definite sailing orders, but fixed me up so I could proceed in the ship on which the survivors were traveling. I got two sailors to help me move my luggage and gear to the new stateroom and left it there. What I wanted most was to get ashore and have a night's uninterrupted sleep and a day free from responsibility. No one was allowed in Honolulu without a gas mask. I put a tooth brush and a razor and other toilet articles in the bag with the mask, slung it over my shoulder and went down the gangplank.

Someone had told me that the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which the Navy had taken over, was the best place to stay. A taxi took me out there. I was more tired than I have ever been before or since. Once inside, I was told that no rooms were avail-

able. At that point my mind refused to function any farther. I sat down in the lobby for some time, watching people passing through. Over in one corner was a telephone switchboard, to which I finally made my way. Vaguely I told the operator that I wanted to get in touch with the Field Director of the Red Cross. She put through the connection, but he was away. Whoever answered the phone couldn't tell me of a hotel where I could spend the night, but said they would contact the Motor Corps. After a long wait I got a call from Mrs. Goodale Moir, Captain of the organization. She said she had found me a hotel room, and would send a car out to get me. She was on night duty, so couldn't come out herself.

I waited out in the courtyard. It was very quiet there. I couldn't quite realize that I was actually ashore, with a few days ahead of me in which there would be nothing to do except rest and relax.

The car arrived and took me to the hotel. I went down to the dining room and had supper, then walked through the slowly darkening streets of Honolulu. Passing a large building which looked like a hotel I looked in and saw a waiting room with people sitting around, reading or smoking.

Out of curiosity I entered. A sign read: "Trans-Oceanic Telephone Messages." At the desk I inquired whether it was possible to phone to the States and was told that it was easily arranged. About three hours would be necessary for the connection.

The Naval Intelligence officer on duty explained the regulations. He asked to whom I wanted to speak, and many other questions. I hadn't heard from my wife, or from anyone else, for that matter, since leaving San Diego. Given a choice between getting the message in the office or in my hotel room I chose the latter, and went back there.

It occurred to me that I ought to phone the Red Cross Field Director's office to let them know that I had found a place to spend the night. The secretary who was on duty asked me if I knew any of the other Red Cross people in the island and began reading off their names. Suddenly I stopped her, "What was that last one? Oviatt? Is that Herb Oviatt? Where can I get in touch with him?" She gave me his phone number, adding that it was unlikely that I could contact him that late.

I put in the call and waited, thinking of the many times I had stopped on the way back from

the training class in Washington and had a drink with Herb at the Roger Smith. Then I heard his voice on the other end of the wire. He almost passed out when I told him who it was. Could he come in and see me? Damned right he could, despite the blackout. How about bringing along some of what we used to get at the Roger Smith? That could be arranged too.

He showed up pretty soon. All this time, when I had been looking for him on some other ship in our fleet, he had been stationed with the Marine Corps in Hawaii. We talked until my call came through. It was wonderful to hear Helen's voice again. At first, not realizing that on this kind of a call only one person could talk at once we fouled it up by interrupting each other, but soon we got the hang of it. The thought of censors listening at both ends didn't bother us a bit. Nor did the remembrance that all the neighbors at home on our party line always listen in. They must have got an earful.

When the call was finished, Herb and I had a drink and talked until three. He decided not to drive back, and stayed with me for the night. In the morning I moved out to share his quarters at



the barracks for the rest of my stay. It felt good to be with the Marine Corps again. He took me over to buy some pants and shirts and underwear, for I had given most of mine away to the survivors on the way back. Then we drove out to the Pali, and sat there for a long time looking down across the green valley to Waikiki Beach. It was cool, and very peaceful. A steady wind blew up the face of the cliff which had witnessed the tragic fight of the islanders many years before. It also blew up the skirts of a cute Hawaiian girl who had wandered along the road with her soldier boy-friend, to his obvious delight and her pretended embarrassment.

We went back to Honolulu and stopped in at the Red Cross Motor Corps office to meet Mrs. Moir. She was charming, and not too busy for a long talk. She told us about the part the Motor Corps had played during the blitz, when the women drove cars under fire, carried out dead and wounded bodies, helped with the nursing and fed refugees; going without sleep or rest for days and nights together.

She asked us to come out to her house for dinner. We went early, and found Mr. Moir working

in his vegetable garden. He took us inside so that I could have a shower and a change of clothing and a cocktail. A quiet meal, seated at a real table, in a real home, was a new and delightful experience. The Japanese maid moved about noiselessly, passing dishes, carrying in more edibles. Comfortably relaxed, we talked for hours, then Herb and I drove back to the barracks through the blackout.

From time to time I checked with my ship, but she wasn't ready to leave yet. Many of the survivors were having special treatments in the hospital, the rest had liberty every day. They were well entertained by the permanent armed forces. Herb and I had dinner again at the Moirs'; this time so that I could meet the Skipper of my new ship. Otherwise I led a very quiet life, shopping, talking over with Herb some of the problems with which he was faced, resting a great deal.

Once more we sailed, homeward bound on the last lap. As we moved slowly through Pearl Harbor we passed another convoy, ready to go out into the South Pacific. All the men were on the decks of all the ships. When we came abreast of the flagship, their band struck up "Anchors Aweigh," and to that stirring song and the cheers of all the

Navy men in the convoy we slipped out into the Pacific again. Everybody was restless, eager for the first sight of land. The chow was wonderful! Lots of entertainment of all kinds. Everyone with complete uniforms now, and even insignia. Only one unpleasant incident; an unannounced tryout of all the guns simultaneously, making us all just about jump out of our shoes. It sounded as if a torpedo had got us at last.

We sighted Seal Rocks. Everyone was on deck, pacing up and down, talking excitedly. Home at last! Suddenly the water dead ahead boiled and churned, and a long, dark shape rose slowly to the surface. We were frozen in our tracks with consternation. A sub, just when we were within sight of land. Then it rose higher, rolled a wicked eye, gave a lazy flip of its tail and submerged. Only a whale!

We steamed slowly through the Golden Gate, under the bridge and up to our dock. We stared at the city like greenhorns. We were back home, safe! I got my luggage down to the docks and looked for a taxi. There were none. A few AWVS cars were there, not enough to take one-tenth our number. An American Railway Express truck went

by and stopped. "Goin' my way, buddy?" called a voice. We threw my luggage in and rolled off to the station.

There was a train leaving for the East in half an hour, and I got the last reservation. I sat down in my roomette. We began to move, gathering speed as we left the city behind us. The past few months seemed remote, shadowy. The future seemed even more indistinct. I didn't care. For a few days at least I wouldn't make any plans, do nothing but eat and sleep. Dispassionately, I took one last mental look back at my Guadalcanal round-trip. There had been danger, excitement, exultation, sorrow, hard work, sleepless nights, swift-moving days.

I had done a good job, I thought impartially, but this was only the beginning. There would be other jobs, in other parts of the world, before the war was over. And I was ready and willing to go.







